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Peter Quennell
Arthur Waley*

*The Master
of Belhaven*

*Inez Holden
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MAGAZINE

EDITED BY PETER QUENNEL

	PAGE
EDITORIAL NOTE.. .. .	348
✓ SHEIKH MUQBIL <i>by The Master of Belhaven</i>	349
✓ IN THE GALLERY <i>by Arthur Waley</i>	367
THE COTTAGE HOSPITAL <i>by John Betjeman</i>	374
SELF PORTRAIT <i>by Osbert Lancaster</i>	376
NOTES FOR A LANTERN LECTURE .. <i>by Osbert Lancaster</i> With Slides	377
ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTIVE <i>by Inez Holden</i>	384
✓ SAINT-MAXIMIN-LA-SAINTE BAUME <i>by James Pope-Hennessy</i>	393
✓ RUSKIN AND ROSE LA TOUCHE <i>by Peter Quennell</i>	404
✓ INTELLECTUALS AT WROCLAW : A SKETCHBOOK <i>by Feliks Topolski</i>	411

JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

EDITORIAL NOTE

The relation between Soviet Russia and the English Left Wing Intellectual is now thirty years old ; and during those three distressful decades it has followed the familiar pattern of many private love-affairs. The red mistress has not been encouraging ; but from time to time for her own good reasons she has seemed to promise favours, has occasionally softened into an enigmatic smile or has gone so far as to suggest that she was not equally displeased with all attempts at courtship. Meanwhile her blush-pink admirer has hoped, despaired and hoped again, exhausted his undoubted ingenuity in fruitless attempts to persuade the object of his love to become a shade more lovable, and fallen back at length on the unhappy belief that, if he has failed to achieve contentment, the responsibility for his mysterious failure must somehow rest with him alone. But still the snubs have continued to arrive ; and not long ago the distinguished editor of *The New Statesman & Nation*, who in days gone by pined more sincerely and sighed more pathetically than most contemporary journalists, was singled out by Moscow Radio to receive a striking reprimand. After giving an oddly distorted version of Mr. Kingsley Martin's early progress, the commentator, a certain Zvavich, accused him of having aimed 'poisoned arrows' against the forces of democracy, compared him to 'a dancer on an inclined plane,' desperately anxious to avoid a mis-step, and concluded by observing with satisfaction that 'he came a cropper all right at the Wroclaw Congress' . . . Indeed, for English Left Wing intellectuals the Wroclaw Congress would appear to have marked a definite dividing-line ; and, as such, it may be remembered with especial interest by the historian of the future. In the present issue of the CORNHILL we publish an illustrated record by Feliks Topolski of the conflicting personalities of that inharmonious gathering. Its æsthetic merits are obvious. Not less considerable, we believe, is its documentary value.

[The Editor asks that all contributions should be addressed to him at 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and accompanied by a stamped envelope.

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Sheikh Muqbil

BY THE MASTER OF BELHAVEN

[The author of this essay served as Political Officer among the independent tribes of the Aden Protectorate from 1934 to 1939.]

I

SHEIKH MUQBIL, the peace-maker of the lower 'Aulaqi, had gone back discontented to his home among the wild Mansuris of Wadi Miria. Two years before, in 1931, Colonel Lake, the Political Officer from the Government of Aden, and I had passed through the borders of Mansuri country and but for Muqbil, whose word was law to the Mansuris, they might well have opposed our passage. Muqbil had seen us through. He had expected that when he visited Aden he would be entertained as a ruling chief, or at least as the very holy and important person he felt himself to be. The Mansuris also expected him to return laden with gifts of arms and ammunition from the grateful British; but he had received the entertainment of a petty Sheikh—which he was—and he returned to Wadi Miria with only two cheap rifles and a small amount of ammunition. There he stayed in his two forts which stood on either side of the high-domed tomb of his ancestor, the saint. The Saints of the Shafe'i sect of South Arabia are in themselves a subject for study. Every village has its saint's tomb. Many are the tombs of Seyyids or others who lived, in the popular estimation, saintly lives, or whose deeds brought renown to their families. But others hide behind their more recent walls and domes the relics of the dim past. They have been accepted as saints' tombs by the Muhammadans, but in fact no one knows their origin or the name which the bones they contain once bore. They have survived from the ages before Islam, and the superstitious people of this history-haunted land have dubbed them with familiar names which by usage have received acceptance.

High above the Dhala' country stands a white tomb, known as the tomb of the prophet Job. It is visited by the people once a year, and gifts are given by all who can to those who live beside it and tend it through the years. An aura of the Prophet's holiness attaches to them and it would not be lucky to offend one of them.

Four or five tombs of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, exist in the Aden Protectorate, and many others are to be found throughout Arabia. Lake and I visited a newly discovered tomb of Jethro

—the Arabs call him the Prophet Sha'ib—near the Wadi Beihan. Later I sought out the discoverer, an old bedouin, who no longer lived by the toil of his legs in the burning sands, but lay in luxury tending the shrine he had discovered. He had so often repeated the story of his discovery that he fully believed it. 'I came by here in the late evening,' he said, 'hungry and tired. When the sun sank I prayed the evening prayer, and one gave me goat's milk to drink and passed on to the *menzil*. I lay down here upon the tomb, which was deeply sand-covered and upon which grew a small thorn-tree. While I slept a figure came to me in a dream and a voice cried, "Wake!" three times. I woke and before me stood an old man, long bearded, one of the *qadimin*.¹ He said to me, "I am the Prophet Sha'ib. Dig here and discover my tomb, which has been too long unknown to the *muslimin*." I arose and worked all night with my hands, but found nothing. In the morning I called my son and we dug all day, but we were unrewarded. That night again I slept here, although the people called me a fool. Again that night the Prophet came to me and cried out on me for a lazy bedouin. "*Ghurf!*" he shouted to me. "Dig, you mule! Must I remain unhonoured because of your stubbornness?" I arose once more and dug like a Jerboa (the jumping hare) until my back was well-nigh broken, when I ceased, crying with exhaustion. But in a moment he was beside me, striking me with his staff. "*Ghurf! Ghurf!*" he cried. "Dig, you old goat! Will I offer you honour and you lie howling in the sand? Dig, in the name of God!" What could I do? I dug like a madman in search of gold, *wullah* until my hands were raw, and at last my fingers touched the plaster of the Prophet's tomb. Then I ran to the folk and all came with me, and we dug and cleared the sand till morning, until the tomb was uncovered from end to end, a plaster tomb, fully twenty paces long.'

I knew the type of tomb which he had found, no doubt by accident when the wind had blown the sand from it. His was of average length for these plaster sarcophagi, although some may exceed it greatly and be forty or fifty paces long and four or five feet high. The tomb of Eve in the Hejaz is reputedly one of the greatest. I have not heard of one of these sarcophagi being inscribed or ornamented in any way, and as soon as they are found they are adopted to some name in the Qoran and are lost to archæology.

In the belief of the Shafe'i Muhammadan, the saint or the prophet is an intermediary with God. To God is paid the due of prayer and conduct, but the intercession of Allah in mundane matters,

¹ Ancient ones.

such as rain, illness and in such things as a desire for children or wealth or success in war, is requested from the saint. Every saint or prophet has an especial day set apart for him in the year. On that day all go to his tomb in holiday clothes and bring gifts to his living attendants for their own use and for the use of poor travellers, for a traveller who has nowhere to go in a village will go to the shrine of the village saint. Having saluted the saint with a shot outside his shrine, the visitor sacrifices a goat or two or gives money to the attendants according to his means, and then enters the shrine. Within he will find a wooden rail pierced by a wicker gate, and through this gate he will find access to the bare plaster tomb. Here he will kneel and whisper his desires under cover of his hand. He may bind himself here by vows. He may ask for revenge upon his enemies, for a good harvest or for increase of his flocks. I have seen a man's expression change from that of a devout suppliant to that of a satisfied recipient, so great are our powers of make-believe. His request made, he will return through the wicket and drink a cup or two of *murr* in the outer shrine.

The saints are not all benevolent. Some demand placation by the traveller or they will follow him with a curse. Such is Weli al Bedoui, whose shrine stands on a lonely spur three thousand feet above the Wadi Masra' and is approached from there by the precipitous foot-path of the Dhaga. Those who do not pay him with a gift, according to their means, will be smitten with illness and will die, unless they hurry back to him. All descendants of saints carry to a greater or a lesser degree the magical powers of their ancestors, and in particular the power to harm and to destroy. Like witch-doctors, they are feared and respected, as being in part dangerous magicians.

Muqbil was a man of peace and a doer of good : but he had no doubt that he possessed the power of doing harm. His faith in his magical powers was part of the complex character which made him a potentially dangerous man to himself and others. He believed himself to be a great man, powerful in unworldly things, and all his life he had been aware of the acceptance by others of his own estimation of himself. His asceticism turned its force inwards, and under his air of poverty and humility the stature of his spirit grew in his own eyes. He stayed in Wadi Miria by his ancestor's tomb, waiting for a chance to demonstrate his power to Aden and Mushreq,¹ which were to him the world.

¹ An ill-defined district between Yemen and Hadhramant, distinguished by customs of greeting and dress rather than by topographical borders. Its main confederation of tribes is that of the 'Aulaqi : the Mansuris of Wadi Miria belong to the lower, or coastal, 'Aulaqi confederation.

It came to him in the winter of 1935. Mr. Maxwell Darling, of the International Locust Commission, planned a journey through 'Aulaqi country from south to north in search of the creepers, the young locusts which hatch out in distant deserts and, when they have grown their wings, come in their vast clouds and devastate the Orient. His journey started from Ahwar, the sea-coast residence of the Lower 'Aulaqi Sultan. Lake arranged an escort for him which was small and led by a vigorous and a highly intelligent Seyyid, Muhammad al 'Amudi. A dapper man this, dark avised, of even temper and of slow speech, which belied the activity of his mind. Maxwell Darling's route would pass the steep gorge of Thrub, in Mansuri country. The Mansuris were men with neither law nor custom, the worst type of southern Arabs. No traveller was safe within or near their borders, not even the Seyyids of their own religion. They would count the cost of a black powder cartridge as fair outlay for a murdered stranger, if from his corpse they could take a length of worn cloth or a pair of sandals. Lake wrote to Sheikh Muqbil requesting him to see Maxwell Darling through. Muqbil did not reply, but, when Al 'Amudi assembled his party at Ahwar, Muqbil's three sons arrived with a polite letter from their father, and the expedition started, with a well-organised, properly constituted escort. On the night before the expedition reached the gorge of Thrub, Muqbil's three sons received a messenger with a letter from their father. They drew apart from the camp and Al 'Amudi watched them, for he was a man alert to every possible danger. They left, taking great care not to disturb the camp, before morning.

Their departure alarmed the escort. It could mean only one thing—that Muqbil intended trouble—for if there was any other cause for the young men to leave their posts they would have excused themselves. Al 'Amudi cared nothing for this—he ordered the escort to move off, well aware that Maxwell Darling would be in danger, but determined to force his passage through 'Aulaqi country, come what might, as a lesson to the people.

At Thrub the Mansuris were in position and halted Maxwell Darling's party, which they heavily outnumbered. Al 'Amudi began a pointless argument with them to gain time, but he had a letter to Sheikh Mehsin, the Ma'ini Sheikh, ready since the morning, and while he spoke to the Mansuri leader his messenger was on his way, running through the steep hills between Thrub and Sa'id, a map distance—had there been a map—of some thirty miles. The Mansuris, a vicious and cowardly lot, were daunted by the vehemence of the Seyyid. He sent for Muqbil, but received

no reply. The Mansuris, emboldened^{at} no doubt by their faith in Muqbil, demanded Maxwell Darling as a hostage. Night fell with the camp surrounded and in effect in Mansuri hands.

The messenger, a Ma'ini, travelled through the hills as only the born mountaineer travels. These Arabs can run for hours at a time, jogging uphill and springing effortlessly over rocky, down-sloping ground. He was challenged and nearly shot by Sheikh Mehsein's watchman and then admitted at once to the Sheikh who had just gone to sleep. Shots were fired and the rallying drum beat loudly in the Wadi and in the dead of the night the Ma'ini warriors in their shining blue war-paint sped through the hills. At dawn two hundred of Ma'in were at Maxwell Darling's camp. The Mansuris did not stay to argue. 'Arise, March!' said the Ma'ini leader. He did not even trouble to reply to Mansuri threats and the expedition moved on towards Yeshbum.

I was sent to investigate the incident. It was wisely decided that I should do so at Yeshbum and when I arrived at Aden to receive my instructions, I found that letters had already been despatched by air arranging that I should travel from Nisab by the same route we had followed in 1931, through the territory of the Geba tribe, and that I was to be flown to Nisab the following day. I took with me 'Ali, my Somali servant.

I had no illusions about the difficulties I was to confront. There was no doubt of the Mansuris' guilt, nor would a hand be raised in their support. But it was obvious to Lake and to myself that where the Mansuris were concerned Muqbil could not be left out. To them Muqbil was supreme in all things, and to us his guilt in the matter was glaring. I had in my pocket an ultimatum linking him and the Mansuris in the charge, stating that he was guilty with them of the hold up, and ordering him to pay five hundred dollars and twenty-five rifles as a punishment. My instructions were to present him with this if he failed, after an interview, to exculpate himself. This meant, I well know, an argument between Muqbil and myself in high *Diwan*; and I did not relish the moment when I should have to declare him guilty and ask him to read the Government's terms. We lodged at Nisab in the house of Seyyid Muhammad al Jiffri, a friend of all strange travellers, and there I met my escort, under the leadership of an old Hedadi Seyyid, a veteran of seventy and more years. I took him into a room apart and Seyyid Muhammad served us with *murr* and hard millet cakes.

There is a fascination in this work which I have not found elsewhere. It was but a day's camel ride to Sa'id, my first stop, the

home of the Ma'ini Sheikh. Yet if we set off with the wrong foot, as it were, we would not see Sa'id. We would be lucky to return unscathed to Yeshbum. The old upper 'Aulaqi Sultan had died and had been gathered to his fathers in the ancient cemetery near his fort at An Nuqub, some five miles from Nisab. He had been succeeded by his eldest son 'Awadh, an ox-like man and old for his thirty or so years. The tribes of his confederation were scattered politically by increasing feuds and, while I spoke to the Hedadi, shots echoed through the town, for the Sultan's own family had murdered and were at feud with each other. He himself was not yet involved, but he excused himself from visiting me on that ground that his presence might be disturbing. The market, one of the richest in the Mushreg, was half deserted; thieves and vagabonds haunted the dark streets by night, and caravans travelled no more between Nisab and Yeshbum. The thriving town, a centre of cotton and indigo growing, one of the most ancient market towns of the old incense road, which Lake, Rickards and I had known in 1931, was now a ghost city, its windows shuttered, its citizens in fear of sudden death. One came upon the roof nearby our lodging and railed upon us. 'Go back, *Nasrani*, to your kennel!' he cried. 'What would you with the saints of the Muslimin? Go back to *mersat* Aden, oh eater of pig and friend of Jews!' The rumour of the Arab rebellion in Palestine had reached them in distorted form. We paid him no attention, but a crowd gathered in the street outside to cheer him on. Presently there was a disturbance in the street. We heard a rough, deserty voice raised in anger. 'Away, children of the bazaar, and cease thy howling fool! Is it thus that the *Dola*¹ is welcomed among us? A shame on all for these hyæna howls! See, the Sahib does not answer you, oh black of face—when the dog barks only the ass replies!' There were sounds of loud thwacks and squeals of protest and presently a knocking on the outer door. 'Ali opened to admit Sheikh Muhammad of the Hammami tribe.

The Hammami are true bedouin, and had only recently, while the old Sultan was yet alive, entered the *Muhajir*.² They barely counted yet as a tribe of the confederation. Some twenty years before they had offended the Sultan's family and he had attacked their main camp, then some ten miles beyond Nisab, with about seven hundred of Ma'in and the *Muhajir*. The Hammami

¹ *Dola*, literally 'Dynasty': used loosely to mean 'government,' either British, as here, or tribal.

² The 'Aulaqi confederation centres round the ancient family of Ma'in. Tribes not of Ma'ini origin are known as the *Muhajir*, or 'Outlanders.'

numbered a bare hundred men. The terrain is sandy, rolling wasteland, dotted with outcrops of black rock and the Hammami met the Sultan's tribesmen in this desert, well beyond their tents. Two only of the Hammami were killed. They slaughtered the 'Aulaqi warriors and drove them back to Nisab. Here the Sultan came to terms with them, giving them land, where they have since built a fort, about five miles to the north of Nisab. They are not Mushreqi; their country of origin is said to be Hadhramaut but in fact it is unknown. They are bedouin and caravaneers and have the monopoly of carrying trade on several desert routes.

This Sheikh Muhammad was the brother of the ruling Hammami Sheikh, a strongly built, hook-nosed warrior named Salih. Muhammad was of lighter build both physically and mentally than his elder brother. He stayed little with his tribe, preferring to wander lightheartedly from town to town. He had not lost, however, the toughness and sharp temper of his tribe and, had it not been for his brother's firm control, he would have split the tribe in two when trouble flared up between their main group and the family of the Shemlani, an unruly lot of would-be brigands whom Sheikh Salih held in brittle control. As caravaneers the Hammami could not afford feuds with settled Arabs.

Muhammad was always hungry. He now called loudly for food. Our host rebuked him, saying that he should restrain his sandy hunger and wait in patience until after night-fall. 'Of a truth,' he said to me, 'it is hard to find provender in Nisab. The market is one of bare stalls and man and beast go hungry since the Sultan died.' I asked the old Hedadi about our journey the next day. He had met the Geba tribesmen who had been sent as our *rafiq*, but he disliked their manner. He had asked whether it was true that I had come to punish Sheikh Muqbil and had then demanded that his three companions should accompany us as paid escorts. I told the Hedadi that I would not take above one *rafiq*. He shook his head, saying that I was right but that the Geba tribe were rapacious and hard of heart. The Geba are of the *Muhajir* and under old Sultan Salih had caused no trouble, but at least ten of them had accompanied Lake in 1931 from Nisab to Sa'id and had all been well paid. The other route led through the country of the Suleimani tribe and had not yet been traversed by Europeans. I knew the Sheikh of the Suleimani, who had been my guest twice in Aden. They were half nomadic, ranging with their flocks north of the barren foothills of the Geba country.

I sent for the Gebai man and he came, his truculence somewhat abating at the sight of Sheikh Muhammad. 'I go with the Sahib

tomorrow,' said the latter. I had not invited him, but I was glad of his company. The Gebai said little and excused himself, promising that he would be on hand at midnight, the hour of our departure, since the days were becoming too hot for comfortable travel. Sheikh Muhammad also left us to see to his camel. He watched the Gebai mount and ride off, looking behind them, in the late evening. Against such petty treacheries the traveller must ever be on his guard. After our supper we hurried our departure and left by the Suleimani route, having ridden to the south of it as if heading for the Geba until we were out of sight of the town. We had no *rafiq* from the *ahl* Suleiman and trusted to escape observation in the wide desert country.

We were not so fortunate. The distance between the main Suleimani settlement and the Gebai township was hardly an hour's ride on a good camel. They were determined that I should not arrive at Sa'id, and they took the precaution of warning the Suleimani that, without a Gebai *rafiq*, I might take the Suleimani route. In the early afternoon approaching a line of bushes my companions halted, having observed men moving in them under cover. The Hedadi rode forward and called out a peaceful greeting to them and seeing some stand up we rode on until one came to the edge of the cover and ordered us to halt. I told the Hedadi and Sheikh Muhammad to try to induce them to appoint one or two leaders who would meet me and who could speak for their tribe. They went forward and were at once engulfed in a vociferous and angry gathering, while we dismounted and, collecting some brushwood, set our kettle on to boil for tea.

When I remember this hold-up, I do so with a warm feeling in my heart for the Suleimani. They fell into the trap we set for them so guilelessly and accepted their defeat with cheerful boisterousness. My two companions soon came back with a tall brother of the Sheikh, who had not yet met me. I awaited him sitting down and he therefore had perforce to seat himself also. I told him I found the weather trying and he replied unhappily that it was hot but not yet *seif*, the full summer; he then collected himself and told me there was no road through the territory of the *ahl* Suleiman for me, no *wallah*! I must return now to Nisab. But in their prompt acceptance of my invitation to parley I had at once divined that they meant us no harm. It was obvious that they were going to bargain, and I dared not look at 'Ali or at Sheikh Muhammad who sat with us. The hot air thickened during that afternoon, and now a cloud of upblown sand moved down upon us from the north, the herald of a storm of rain. I told the

Suleimani that I was a traveller, and that I asked for a *rafiq*. I requested his and his tribe's pardon for not having given warning of my approach, but, knowing the Suleimani through my friendship with their Sheikh, I knew them for true Arabs and I asked for one *rafiq* 'for the honour of their tribe and for the custom of the road.'

He was comically doubtful of how to answer. These desert men do not find cunning ready to their minds, as do the town-dwellers of the mountains. 'The Sheikh, my brother, is not here—' he began and Sheikh Muhammed broke in, 'And well for you he is not, by God! He has lodged with Hamilton and there is bread and salt between them these two years.'—'But I would not pass through his country without a *rafiq*,' I added. 'We go to Sa'id and to Yeshbum where we are expected and in three days or less we will return by this same route, if God wills.'

At that moment the first of the high red pillars of sand, which had been whirling towards us, broke over us with a blast of cold wind. These desert storms in the spring are violent but of short duration, and this one was typical of its kind. Icy rain lashed us for some ten minutes and we hid our heads in shawls and head-cloths. When the wind dropped, the Suleimani left us to consult with his men. He returned with three companions, who looked longingly at the kettle, but the rain had extinguished the fire. Once again I asked for one *rafiq*, 'But,' said one, 'one is not sufficient honour for the Government. The officers take many *rafiks* and travel like great men! '—'I will take as many *rafiks* as you like to send with me,' I replied, looking as innocent as I could. They looked at each other and then they fell into the trap. 'How much will you pay them?' they asked. I turned to Sheikh Muhammad; 'How much is the price of a Suleimani?' I asked. He looked up, his eyes narrowing. 'I do not know,' he replied, 'for the Hammami are not sold.'

There was a moment's consternation. Then the Suleimani leader sprang to his feet: 'Arise, march, *ya* Hamilton!' he cried; 'Wullah, a shame upon us of the *ahl* Suleiman—*qūm*! Rise all of you and Sheikh Muhammad, let there be no word of this in the *menzil* of *ahl* Hamman, lest there be trouble between us. We are bedouin, *gohal* (children or ignorant people) who know not our own customs.' We rode forward to where the remainder of the Suleimani awaited us. 'The talk is finished!' he shouted to them. 'A shame on us that we bargain and sell our companions! Who will now speak of the honour of *ahl* Suleiman? Shall we be for sale in the Jews' shops at Nisab? Come, *ya* Sahib, ride forward as our guest, *ehlen wa sehlen lil Hakuma* (welcome to the Government),

Marhabba wa hayyabikum, are not the *ahl* Suleiman children of the custom, tribesmen and *muslimin*?' And thus he continued to lament and to exhort for some distance alternately, while we used comforting words and excused ourselves for the trouble we had caused by not sending messengers ahead of us to tell of our approach.

The delay made it impossible to reach Sa'id that night. Masseina could not be approached after dark with safety, for in the intervening years the ugly Hydra of the feud had grown new heads and the land was dark with treachery and murder. We made camp in the open, a light rain falling, and busied ourselves with fires and cooking-pots, for we were the Suleimani's guests and they had procured four goats for us from a wandering herd. The herdsman, thin and burnt with his exhausting month-long vigil, had joined us and sat breathing the steam from a pot. He had not tasted flesh for five moons, he said, his food being millet cakes burnt in the ashes of a fire and a little milk at dawn and in the evening. He was a Tosali, a small tribe of the Muhajir. After our supper, we lay down by the fire to sleep. There is no sleep like these first hours of an Arabian night before the sand cools. The rain had cleared and the stars were points of white fire, and the damp sand exhaled its aromatic scents.

But there was to be no sleep for us that night. The Suleimanis had gathered round two great fires and now began to sing us a lullaby. Their mouths opened within their beards like caverns, and the muscles of their hairy chests stood out like bands as they howled horribly in chorus. The townsmen sings eerily through his nose, making a sound like a distant cat in pain. But it is a distant cat, and it can be disregarded with practice. The desert man does not sing—he shouts and roars in a cascading rhythm. With the prodigious opening of his mouth his eyes are closed and his teeth shine large as whitened tomb stones. His voice, trained to carry far over the unechoing sands, beats against his companions' ear-drums and he howls back in revenge. We bound our heads in cloths, but it was of no avail. At last the old Hedadi could bear it no longer. 'Peace!' he shouted, 'peace, oh men! The night is far gone and we have not slept!'—'When we watch we sing, by God!' they replied. 'Sing then of love, may a djin take you!'—'But it is of that we do sing!' they replied. We were glad when a yellow dawn called us to our mounts.

II

Mehsin, the Shiekh of Ma'in, was alone in his long reception room when we came to him. He had aged, smitten by rheumatism

and arthritis. I asked his pardon for coming at once to the object of my visit, since it is considered good manners among them to speak of unimportant matters at first, so as to establish a comfortable atmosphere of understanding in which the rough notes of discord may sound more mellow. Mehsin sighed wearily. The Mansuri? They were dogs, as were all who lived in Munqa'. They had no friends and none cared what happened to them. But Muqbil was a different matter. Let the government leave Muqbil out of it.

I asked him how the Government could leave Muqbil out of it, if he himself elected to enter it. He laughed. 'You will see Muqbil tomorrow,' he said, 'think then when you speak to him how best to remove this burden from the Government. You are a Political Officer—you should see that the Government do not make mistakes in Arabia. Think not, Hamilton, that you must be honourable in your report. The matter is over, the Official Mixwell [Maxwell Darling] has gone and was delayed but for one night, when he slept and no harm came to him. If Muqbil has done wrong, *la bas*, it does not matter. *Wullah*, I know full well that should you tell Lake that Muqbil is not guilty, he will rejoice and we, the friends of the Government, will rejoice also.'

'And what will Muqbil do?'

'I know not, *wa ma yikhus*, it matters not. They say he has told the Mansuri to fire on all aircraft which pass over them. Let them fire, their rifles carry no farther than a sling-stone, and they shot thus—with both eyes closed—while their wives stand behind them and catch them when they fall!'

While we laughed, I heard far off, muffled by the turning of some steep gorge, the high-pitched, rhythmic chanting of a war-song. I looked from the narrow, loophole-window and saw the singers run suddenly from the mouth of a gully into the open wadi bed, when the full volume of their shouting song struck the square houses and the rocky mountain and echoed through the glen. Both words and tune were familiar to me, a favourite among the warriors of Ma'in :

'We come from the clothed cliff and the glens were a shield for us,

Oh, tribesmen, we shall not give way when the shots strike among us and from us!'

The war song is called the *Zamil*. The chant tunes are few and probably of ancient origin. They are simple and of few notes, and their rhythm is sharp and fits a running step. They are sung with quickened pace, antiphonally, the words being usually made to suit the occasion. Now the singers came towards us at their swing-

ing jog-trot, their oiled blue bodies flashing in the sun, here and there a silver ornamented rifle twirled high as one or other sprang and pirouetted among his running companions. They numbered about thirty, all young men. As they reached the courtyard of Mehsin's fort, they halted and, lifting cupped hands to their mouths, gave the high-pitched war-cry of the mountains. I asked Mehsin where they had been. He replied that they had come from an ambush against the Ba Ras. Five years ago he had spoken of this feud regretfully, but he had changed during the subsequent years of killing. Now he spoke with anger. 'God wound them, the *mela'in*, the accursed ones!'

The young men came in, and the close room filled with the acrid smell of their sweat. They sat full of cheer, as if they had returned from some bold venture. Yet they had but slain a man riding on a donkey, and not one shot had been fired against them. To do this murder, thirty of them had banded together. I perceived in some of their faces a grain of shame, a look of self-contemplation, while others took up the empty, boasting tale. I asked a youth whom I had known in the Levies, 'How many fought against you?' This set him back in mid sentence and all eyes turned on me. He was a conceited young savage, but in his eye I detected a shadow of doubt that I might despise him. 'There were but him and his escort,' he replied. 'The Ba Ras do not venture out when we are abroad in the hills!'

My escort, the Hedadi Seyyid, had said nothing beyond the normal greeting since we had entered. Now he asked quietly who had been the dead man's escort. He was told the name of a Seyyid, and for a moment he dropped his face and ruffled his beard with his hand. Later on the road he said to me, 'I take refuge in Allah from *ahl Ma'in*! They respect none, not even the holiest, and slay against all custom. Now in all this country there remain only the Jiffri and the Hedadi whose faces *Ma'in* have not blackened. I tell you that, when the tribesmen no longer care for the custom, the end of the race is close at hand.'

The old hook-nosed warrior Bu Bakr, Sheikh Mehsin's brother, now came in, and we made place for him between myself and 'Ali. He asked after Lake and then about the business of Muqbil. Did I think Muqbil had had a hand in the holdup? I replied that I would be seeing Muqbil at Yeshbum the following day and that it was my duty to make up my mind when we had met. Sheikh Bu Bakr's sharp eye roved round the *Mijlis*. 'Will any here say that Muqbil is guilty?' he asked and there was silence. My heart sank, for the silence was succeeded by murmurs of dissent; and

one said loudly, ' *Wullah*, Muqbil is *sahib al kheir*, a friend of good, and *abu as sulh*, a father of peace ! ' Sheikh Bu Bakr glowered at them. ' When I was a youth,' he said, ' we of Ma'in spoke the truth ; all here know that Muqbil is guilty and only he. Who else would stop Mixwil with his escort of Ma'in and the Seyyids of Islam ? Do you say the Mansuris ? What Muqbil spits out, they eat it up. Now for his fault all must suffer, the Mansuri, the Government and us. Did we not send to save the Sahib Mixwil a night's journey, and now all the ignorant will say that Ma'in is turned Christian and helps the Government against the saints.' He turned to me : ' Let the Government put me in an aircraft and I will drop the first bomb on Muqbil bin Salim ! '

This was support indeed. Bu Bakr was not the man to say one thing in his home and another outside. No one raised the subject again that day. We lunched on unleavened bread, dipped in a warm gravy and left soon after for Yeshbum.

It would be tedious to try to describe our evening in Yeshbum. Seyyid 'Ali al Jiffri, with whom we lodged, was ageing, and night and day his house echoed with the strident voices of contestants who had brought their cases to him. The fact that he had no power to enforce his judgments had over the years robbed him of decision. He floundered in compromise even over the price of a goat. His genuine, warm-hearted desire for good was in itself a burden on him, for he tried to impute good where there was nothing but evil. I stayed a while watching this tragi-comic riot, where men clutched each other's beards and foamed at the mouth in their vehemence, while Seyyid 'Ali called vainly on God and His saints for truth.

Seyyid Muhammad al 'Amudi had arrived at Yeshbum the day before to give his evidence in front of Muqbil. It was arranged that Muqbil should be confronted in an upper room the following morning, where only coffee would be served. Seyyid 'Ali would be there and two of his brothers and three representatives from Ma'in. Others who were to be present I have forgotten now, but they were representatives of the district, for I wished Muqbil's guilt, if it were proved, to be fully acknowledged locally, so that my task, if it came to bombing operations, might be made the easier. These things arranged with the 'Amudi we retired to our room.

The next day's audience has remained vividly with me. The room was rectangular, and Muqbil and I sat facing each other at either end. At my back was an open window, giving a view of the town and of some 'Ilb trees, and beyond, of the bare red mountainside. By Muqbil was the door, and in the side of the

doorway stood a small iron brazier, full of glowing charcoal, on which rested a tall iron kettle, full of steaming *murr*. This now was lifted by a servant and we were all served with the brew, sipping noisily as is the custom and smacking our lips in compliment to our host, and rolling the empty cups across the carpet when we had done. The dregs fall from the rolling cups and are at once black with flies. I then spoke to Muqbil, 'Ya Muqbil,' and told him of my orders to come as a representative of the Government who charged him, with the Mansuris of Wadi Miria, of conspiring to obstruct and endanger an official of the International Locust Commission in the gorge at Thrub. I felt, as I spoke, the weakness of my position, and I added that he had done this after sending his sons to welcome the Official and after leading him to within a morning's march of Thrub. I said that I only was the judge and that, if he could not exculpate himself in my opinion, I had the duty of handing to him the Government's ultimatum and of returning to Aden to report. Muqbil had listened to this with his head bowed down, looking at the carpet. He now asked what proof the Government had against him, and I called on Seyyid Muhammad to speak.

The Seyyid described the assembly of the escort with Muqbil's three sons and the march until the evening of the young men's desertion. He described the arrival of the messenger with a letter on that evening and the statement of one of the young men that it was from their father. Muqbil listened in silence. The Seyyid then described the secret departure of Muqbil's sons by night and the subsequent hold-up in the gorge. Then he said, 'while we were thus in danger from the Mansuris in the gorge, I wrote to you. Why did you not come?'

Now this was the whole matter. On Muqbil's answer the whole case depended. He could say a number of things and I half hoped that I might hear one or other of them and be able to keep the ultimatum in my pocket. We had, after all, not heard Muqbil's side of the story. Perhaps he would plead sickness, a sudden household emergency or any unexpected private affair which had caused him to send for his sons, trusting that the Mansuris would behave themselves. Perhaps already he had rebuked the Mansuris and carried with him their guarantee of future good behaviour and an apology. We might even avoid the expense and difficulty of proceeding with the matter after all. We waited for his answer hopefully. He gave it not to Seyyid Muhammad but to the whole *Mijlis*.

'What are the Mansuris to me,' he asked, 'or I to them? They

are a tribe like any other tribe and I am not their Sheikh. I am a wandering man of no tribe, a poor Sheikh who walks abroad unarmed, the friend of all and master of none. Of a truth I received the letter. I did not come, for the affair was nought to do with me and, had I spoken to the Mansuri, they would not have listened to me. So I remained in my house among my own affairs.'

There was a murmur of astonishment from the *Mijlis*. No one would speak, hoping that I had not appreciated what a lie we had just been told. Muqbil's eyes were now on me, bright with challenge. And there was within them something else, a fanatical confidence as if he dared me to give the lie to him. He seemed to me to become suddenly all eyes, and a little time must have elapsed before I was called to myself by a gust of cool wind from the window. Even so I could find no words, and in silence I handed the ultimatum to Seyyid 'Ali, who pretended that he could not find his spectacles and passed it to Seyyid Muhammad, who read it out clearly. It ordered Muqbil and the Mansuris to pay five hundred Maria Theresa dollars and twenty-five rifles within three weeks, on pain of being subjected to air bombardment and to the blockade of their territory, until such time as the fine should be paid. Seyyid Muhammad handed the document back to me, and I reached across and placed it in Muqbil's hands. He rose without a word, putting the document into his belt. He turned at the doorway and looked back at the silent company. Then he stooped quickly to the brazier and plunged his hands into the glowing charcoal. We caught our breath and leaned forward. He lifted a double handful of the charcoal and, half kneeling, dropped it into the front of his loincloth; then, rising a little, he held the hem of his loincloth out in his left hand and with his right scooped out another handful of the red-hot embers and dropped it among the rest. He then shook out the charcoal on the floor and left the room.

I have often thought about it and come to no conclusion. Was it some substance on his hands or some other simple trick? There was no opportunity for testing him afterwards, or for seeing whether the hot coals had burnt his clothing. His movements had been so swift and graceful, his expression absorbed, his final spilling of the burning charcoal had been hardly more than the shake a man will give to his clothing to rid it of dust. Yet all—the setting of the long room, the silent audience, startled and craning forward, the swift movements of the figure in the doorway—had been intensely dramatic. We were shocked inwardly by seeing the unbelievable.

I will not attempt to describe the torrent of exclamations which followed when the *mijlis* had found breath. All wished to describe

what they had seen, and to hear what everyone else had seen, and none could wait for the other. The political implications were simple and devastating. The story of Muqbil's miracle would spread far from this room, and the story of his lies to me would spread nowhere. They were even now forgotten. By this silent act, however it was done, Muqbil had gained the ascendancy. I listened politely to their earnest pleas to me to forget the duty of reporting fairly on Muqbil, and to report that only the Mansuris were to blame, and that they, after all, were only ignorant savages. There was another side to the matter—Muqbil was in the wrong. He had misled the Mansuris and by his action an Officer and his escort had been put into grave danger. The ultimatum must be carried out and I cared little if the Mansuris escaped scot free, so long as Muqbil's estimation of himself fell to reasonable proportions.

I was aware of great kindness towards me from all in Seyyid 'Ali's house. My food was of the best, and a fur coverlet was brought to me late at night, lest I should feel the cold mountain wind. Eggs and a roast fowl were our breakfast, and a letter was handed to me from Sheikh Mehsin apologising for the strength of the Ma'ini escort which waited for us, some twenty men. There were others in the hills invisible to us. Even so, in a turn of the Wadi before Sa'id, an old man was loitering, and I heard the slug from his rusty carbine high above me, before he was disarmed and left railing by the roadside. I reported the delivery of the ultimatum to Aden, but I made no mention to Lake of Muqbil and the charcoal. In four days we were back in Yeshbum and my staff was increased by two Arab wireless operators in charge of L.A.C. Bates of No. 8 Bomber Squadron. The real trial of Muqbil was to begin.

I had had some experience of these bombing operations. They have been much criticised, but, for all the loud bangs, they were as humane as attacks on human beings and their houses with high explosive can be. The Political Officer's work was to live as near as possible to the target, and to await the tribesmen's submission, while plaguing all concerned with propaganda. It was interesting and sometimes exacting work, but it is no part of my story to write of it. The operations against Muqbil and the Mansuris were of the usual pattern. Thanks to the warning of impending attack given to allow women and children to be conveyed to safety, no tribesman was hurt. The women (as did not always happen), were comfortably housed nearby, and the tribesmen spent the first two days among the rocks shooting hopefully at the aircraft and delighting in the noise and sight of falling bombs. As the main object of

the bombers was to blockade the valley, they did not try to destroy houses other than those of guilty leaders ; this puzzled tribesmen sometimes, and on one occasion led to the Qateibi tribe writing a stiff note to the Government after a week's sporadic bombardment of their territory, complaining of the inaccuracy of the bombing and saying that it was destroying public confidence in the ability of the British to protect them !

I had arranged that the main targets for destruction were Muqbil's two forts, and these were both hit in the first salvo, destroying one completely and rendering the other unsafe. I had good agents and could follow the reactions of the Mansuris fairly easily. We heard that they had sent into Hadhina, a then unvisited district, to purchase arms from one Hassein bin Qowat, the principle arms trader of all that district and I sent for him. I was to have some grim dealings with him later. He came with promptitude and many excuses. As the bombing continued, popular opinion swung more in our favour. Muqbil, deserted by the Mansuris, sought refuge with a near neighbour, the Shama'i Sheikh, who wrote to me that he seemed dazed, ate very little and spoke only in answer and then abstractedly. Muqbil's brothers called at our house, ostensibly to argue over the amount of the fine. We were suspicious of them, however, and their visit proved to have no such innocent intention. They left after a night in their room, with the door locked on them.

After ten days Muqbil came in to surrender. We sat again in the long room where he had before astonished us. There was no brazier burning by the door. I met him half way down the room, and he gave me his hand but would not look at me. During the long hour while we eat the feast good Seyyid 'Ali had prepared for us in the midst of a cheerful company, he looked at me only once. His face was grave and he smiled slightly with his lips ; but his eyes were unsmiling, and deep in them I saw the shadows of doubt, not of me but of himself. He left the feast like an old man, stooped and feeble. I had no speech with him. I should have liked to have spoken some word of cheer to him in private before we went our ways, but he was already in the shadows and I had other pointless things to do in Aden. I should have stayed and gone down to Mansuri country, but there was no thought then in the official mind of the necessity of exploiting the political advantage of such an operation. To the Mansuris we had been only a distant Government, the source of a rifle or two in the year with which to kill their enemies. We were now a distant Government which had frightened and hurt them and gone back again.

I travelled back to Nisab and camped outside the town. There I met Mubarak 'Abdalla, a Tosali, who had served under me in the Levies. While on leave, his guest was murdered at a wedding in his uncle's camp. Mubarak returned to Aden and took his discharge from the Levies and left for his country with a new rifle. To leave his guest unavenged would, according to tribal custom, be the blackest of shame. Mubarak avenged his guest by practically wiping out his own family in a year-long, single-handed war. He was now lodging with the outlying Suleimani and sought service with me. We returned to Aden together.

For Muqbil there was no flight. His mind already paced dark, winding corridors with quickened step. All his life he had looked at himself in the mirror of his fancies with a sure and fanatical belief that the image was true. The mirror had been shattered and he had found himself, but too late. He had no liking for what he had found and could not fly from it. It went with him, his true shadow, a silent companion in the increasing darkness. His spare body could not bear the wandering burden of his mind, and in a few months they buried him by his ancestor's tomb, between the ruins of his tall forts.

In the Gallery

BY ARTHUR WALEY

BEHIND iron railings, across a huge cobbled space, umbrellas laboured unevenly, seeming at moments to press so close into the welter of the stone that the eye lost them as it loses a boat at sea. At last, as though struggling shoreward across the long ladder of the surf, they swayed slowly up the dripping steps and at the top suddenly rippled and collapsed, disclosing between the pillars a herd of baffled pilgrims who, before pressing through the narrow doors, now turned for an instant towards the courtyard and the town, as though to drink in a last breath of reality before plunging into an abstract, inanimate world.

It seemed that beyond the massive portico must open out some vast luminous space; but behind the glazed swing-doors the pilgrims came suddenly upon a dark shallow lobby, where a woman in a shawl held her knitting very close to her eyes, while through the thick air, from a doorway at her side, came a smell of cooking and the sound of birds moving in a cage. Now one by one the pilgrims began to filter through a turn-stile into the main hall. Some—for the most part the rougher and stronger of them—through sheer timidity did not press hard enough and when they faltered, the woman with the shawl pushed them through, like clothes through a creaking mangle.

Two curving staircases with marble balustrades met on a wide empty landing where darkly, with its back to a high window, stood the life-size statue of a man in evening dress, with drooping moustaches and long hair parted at the side. There were medals and orders on his coat, the ribbon and pins that held them were all shown, as were too the watch-chain, the heavy signet and the rings on his right hand. But though these were metal rendered in metal, they were not more real than the undulating silk neck-tie and the elastic sides of his shoes. His left hand was slipped rather furtively into the trouser pocket, as though he were feeling for a tip.

The long room, from doorway to doorway, was full of travel. Weaving itself into the sound of their own hushed footfall the pilgrims still heard the uneasy rattle of the night train, and into the dark pools on the wall there crept the image of a breakfast-tray, lying on an unmade bed.

And just as their own thought-pictures, now cavernously framed in gold, took on a mirrored gravity and distinctness unknown in the common world, so too during the journey of which this pilgrimage through the gallery was part, their own image of themselves had gradually cleared and crystallized. They saw themselves no longer as dim lay-figures, called to life only by a series of costumes and occupations—not as a succession of personalities—but as one thing always, that travelled and visited and travelled, perpetually filling and unfilling the same bag, perpetually feeling in the same pocket for change and keys.

And yet the pilgrim's personality, now so strangely sharpened and clarified, was largely an affair of chance. A book, a pair of gloves snatched up at the last moment had fixed his picture of himself and coloured the whole journey.

The air was close and difficult to breathe. It was indeed not so much air as a tight, sweet vapour that rose from the thickly waxed floor. In such an atmosphere any movement would have been tiring, and that of walking was doubly so, for the floor was highly polished, slippery as ice, and the pilgrims, not daring to raise their feet, shuffled down the long gallery like flies clawing the glass walls of an air-tight trap. Their movements, in this lethal cage, became dreamier and dreamier, and but for the sounds of the night-journey, a lock that continually strained and rattled, water that sighed in a pipe, a childish ding-dong bell, the last despairing whistle of a distant engine—echoes that like the remnants of a tempest still snapped and fluttered in the ravaged corridors of the brain—they must have fallen asleep.

But suddenly into this inert and desiccated world there burst a sweep of cumbrous activity. Under the high square door and straight down the long room was pushed a lady in an invalid chair. She did not look to right or left but, propped stiffly on a pile of cushions, between which a picture-paper was thrust, her hands folded over the knob of the steering-bar, she gazed intently at the lines on the glassy floor as though all her strength were concentrated on reaching the end of the long gallery.

The two men who pushed the chair bent so low that their faces could not be seen. This attitude gave them an air of extreme solicitude; they seemed to be anxious that the invalid should be spared the effort of raising her voice, should be able at any moment to convey the most faintly whispered complaint or request. The lady's lips however, though always slightly parted, never moved, and at times it seemed as though the attention of the two men were fixed not so much on the furtherance of her small passing

wishes as on the fulfilment of her main desire : to keep a straight and continual course towards the door at the end of the long room ; and for this purpose it was necessary that they should attend not so much to her as to their own feet, planting them in an intricate angular pattern, to obtain a steady purchase on the slippery floor.

The travellers had pushed on into the second room, which appeared to be in all respects identical with the first. But one of them after a while stumbled against something that proved to be a long low seat and, to save himself from falling, suddenly sat down. The others quietly ranged themselves by his side. Here for a time, as previously in the dining-car with its access of space and light, stretching their legs and safely testing the glassy composition of the floor, they enjoyed, on this soft yet solid couch, an extraordinary sense of respite and relief. But with a great gold-framed space on the wall in front of them, they could feel themselves, like birds assembled on a telegraph wire, still to be at work, still to be passively obeying the mysterious impulse of their migration.

It had been growing steadily lighter, and now the sun came out making all at once a complete and convenient looking-glass of the dark rectangle in front of which they sat. One of the pilgrims stepped forward to arrange his tie ; but immediately there was a cranking and jarring in a far corner of the room and a slight flapping sound overhead. With one accord a whole series of yellow blinds spread across the glass roof. By the time the pilgrim had raised his hands to his neck the mirror had ceased to exist. The others looked at him apologetically as, still fingering his bow, he gazed with a certain resentment at the scene which, abolishing his own image, had slanted into the golden frame.

Two naked men in plumed helmets were rescuing an empty bird-cage from a ruined church. Towards the flat blue distance a camel, led by chanting angels, carried lashed to its back a marble fountain and a trumpet draped in cloth of gold.

There was a long silence, broken by the sudden wailing of a child. They gave him a disc to play with, a white, numbered disc, such as each of them had exchanged for his dripping encumbrances, while they themselves continued to gaze spell-bound by the inexplicable revelation that confronted them. Often on their journey things no less astonishing—cities of shapeless slag or rivers of fire plucked from a tangle of trucks, wires and magic lights—had flashed on to the screen of their senses in the hurry of the dark ; or at dawn, having steamed quietly into a huge station they had jolted out of it again, finally coming to an unexpected

standstill close beside an isolated row of shallow houses on the outskirts of the town.

Then their minds, leaving the steamy carriage, had been projected through the sharp stillness of the morning air, under half-pulled blinds, into a dingy bedroom where a headless figure lay across a wooden chair, or a broken saucer moved as though drawn by wire over the space between the stair-rail and the door. But even these dim vistas and hasty prefigurements, compared with what was now before them, had seemed to the pilgrims to be full of scenic purpose. The fountain? The angels? A sort of bewildered discomfort held the travellers rooted to the spot, waiting for the word, the syllable that should release them.

Slowly, as though drawn by the unspoken question, a white-haired pensioner in a peaked cap, guardian of the two long rooms, shuffled to their side. 'Allegorical,' he whispered, bending over the row of pilgrims and laying a finger to his forehead, with the gesture of one who has a harmless madman in his care.

'Allegorical.' The word, though it told so little, served nevertheless a kind of mechanical purpose, passing from mouth to mouth with a series of slight shocks which, gathering scope and momentum, ended at last in an uneasy fidgeting with buckles and catches, a restless scraping of feet.

Soon with a last glance at the strange borderland that had detained them so long, the pilgrims pushed out of their siding. At first they moved forward again in a solid mass. But they had lost their real cohesion. Two of them presently, as though all at once endowed with a propulsion of their own, branched off from the crowd, and drifted separately through the grey hush into an avenue of small side rooms, where they met time after time in front of the same row of grubby Dutch carousals, almost colliding, then parting again, with the sharp twist of a gold-fish into whose pool a pebble has been thrown.

Soon there was a greater disruption. The child, whose first and real fear had been so easily distracted, now began to take fright causelessly at every turn. Soon the discs of the whole family were in its possession. With these in its hand, pausing at every few steps to look back, yet mounting with incredible rapidity, it darted up a steep, dark staircase the very existence of which no one else had perceived. The mother panted after it, followed by the whole family; they did not return. The pilgrims were pushing once more straight through the heavy waxen air. Their course was set; it seemed as though nothing could turn them aside. But like a river in whose banks a breach has accidentally been made,

one after another they were drawn through the unnoticed gap, till only a thin trickle of them oozed slowly down the centre of the glassy floor.

The rest, re-animated by the diversion, rose wave on wave. They did not feel the exertion. Their feet perhaps were numbed by so much shuffling and sliding. It was as though by magic that they arrived at the doorway of a low upper room.

They gave a deep sigh of relief. Here at last was no shadow-fair, no hall of mysteries. The air lived, the walls spoke, there were attitudes and textures that they knew.

Military men were frequent ; here however not bewigged or helmeted, but bald, or with close-cropped, unlegendary hair. There were stolid queens and princesses whose presence could not bewilder or embarrass the humblest visitor, so rustic and unfashionable were the clothes they wore. There was a schoolboy in an Eton collar cutting a silvery cake into which a sprig of holly was thrust. There was a basket of grey kittens and an orchard full of bloom.

The kittens were high on the wall. Wishing to please the child, to whose inconsequence they owed this breath of solidity, this welcome contact with a sharper, more natural world, one of the pilgrims seized it in his arms and held it close to the picture.

With a cry of delight the child stretched out its hand, but its fingers, that expected warm fur, slid along the glass with a faint creaking sound, not unlike the mewing of an offended cat. Hastily, as though it had touched a thorn, the child drew back its hand, and again burst into tears.

Close by there was a narrow staircase, this time a mere turret stair. It was too insignificant to promise anything of value or importance, but it at least afforded a refuge from the child's cries and, by a simple reckoning, gave hope of a scene intensely actual and alive. They climbed the stairway (the less phlegmatic of the pilgrims) round and round, their hands on the rough stone.

They found themselves now in a sort of attic, with low windows down the side. Here indeed was life ; but of a kind more disconcerting than the staring deadness of the great caverns below. There was something in the air that was dizzy and shrill. The room shimmered like a kaleidoscope with fragments of blue sky, white sand and green surf. The clouds darted and flashed from the walls, meeting the first intruder like a troop of butterflies, so sharp and bright that here inside seemed to be the world of the living, and outside, framed by the low windows, only a coloured picture of blue spaces and a river winding round a town. But within everything, when one looked more closely, was broken,

enigmatic, incomplete. Much was hinted at, suggested ; nothing flatly stated. The finger, so to speak, was stretched, pointing at the star, but the star was not there. They felt that they were gazing into the future, at things conceived of and vaguely propounded, but still not ready to occur. And like the guesser in a family game who, coming in too soon and finding the word or scene still in dispute, saunters away again to some remote passage, so now the pilgrims, as though to give these embryonic images time to settle and compose, turned their backs on the room, strolled towards the window-seats, and forcing the windows to open to their widest thrust themselves for a moment into the unprophetic world outside. Then in a dark mass they drifted from the turret-window to the door, their gaze distrustfully averted from the unformed images on the walls, images whose pretensions to truth they could no more admit than one would believe in what called itself the day after to-morrow's newspaper.

But as they passed towards the door, there struck at them, seen only with the corner of the eye, a sudden, amended vision ; solid, purposeful, complete. It was as though a hand had shot out of the future and hooked it into their ken. Incredulous, they wheeled round ; the marvel on the walls was still there. But no sooner had they halted than a huge bell suddenly moved in the tower. The sound, coming from so close, had no time to poise for its flight, but leapt at them as mere uproar and confusion. It rattled along the walls, shook dust from the floor, bombarded the narrow stair.

And through the midst of the din there sounded too, from room to room, one after another the voices of the guardians rising with a burst of startled energy, as though a box of tin soldiers had suddenly been woken for their roll-call by an invisible power.

* * *

There was a halt and crush at one of the doors. Wave after wave of pilgrims broke against a dark, obstructing mass, which proved to be the invalid lady's wheeled chair. It advanced slowly now, and also rather unsteadily. Her two attendants or companions had pulled the newspaper from under her pillow and holding it between them were reading as they went. As though to make up for having abstracted this much of their attention, they were pressing very hard on the back rail with their outer hands—too heavily indeed, and the front wheel was in the air. The lady still looked straight in front of her, just as at the beginning when everything still lay ahead, and with hands tightly folded over the steering-bar guided her wheel through the air on a rigid and un-

varying course. The statue guarded the final stairway with an air of confident reality. His face was towards the street. He seemed even to regard with a certain contempt—the loftily averted gaze and fastidious pose of the right elbow suggested it—the polished stretches, the dim lifeless walls.

The galleries were cleared ; emptied of their last human drop. Even the invalid lady and her chair had at the last moment vanished—decently spirited away.

The pilgrims were trooping out of the hall. There was light ahead ; they were nearing the end of their tunnel. Decked again in the damp properties with which, like soul and body at the Judgment, they were at last re-united, they walked slightly sideways, raising their feet high, down the long series of steps, at every step breathing deeply into their stifled lungs the trivial animation of the outer world.

The Cottage Hospital

BY JOHN BETJEMAN

AT the end of a long-walled garden,
in a provincial town,
A brick path led to a mulberry
scanty grass at its feet
I lay under blackening branches
where the mulberry leaves hung down
Sheltering ruby fruit globes,
from a Sunday teatime heat
Apple and plum espaliers
basked upon bricks of brown
The air was swimming with insects
children played in the street.

Out of this bright intentness
into the mulberry shade
Musca domestica (housefly)
swung from the August light
Slap into slithery rigging
by the waiting spider made
Which spun the lithe elastic
till the fly was shrouded tight
Down came the hairy talons
and the horrible poison blade,
And none of the garden noticed
that fizzing, hopeless fight.

Say in what Cottage Hospital
whose pale green walls resound
With the tap upon polished parquet
of inflexible nurses' feet
Shall I myself be lying
when they range the screens around?

And say shall I groan in dying
as I twist the sweaty sheet?
Or gasp for breath uncrying
as I feel my senses drown'd
While the air is swimming with insects
and children play in the street?



SELF PORTRAIT

Notes for a Lantern Lecture

DELIVERED TO THE DRAYNEFLEETE AND SOUTH-EAST LONDON
HISTORICAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.

SLIDE 1. *Poets' Corner about 1800. A drawing made shortly after the completion of the Gothic Villa erected by the well-known poet, Jeremy Tipple, Esq., on ground belonging to his patron the 6th Lord Littlehampton. Behind the house stretches His Lordship's park, recently landscaped by Humphrey Repton, Esq. On the hill in the distance are visible the ruins of a 14th-century Augustinian priory.*

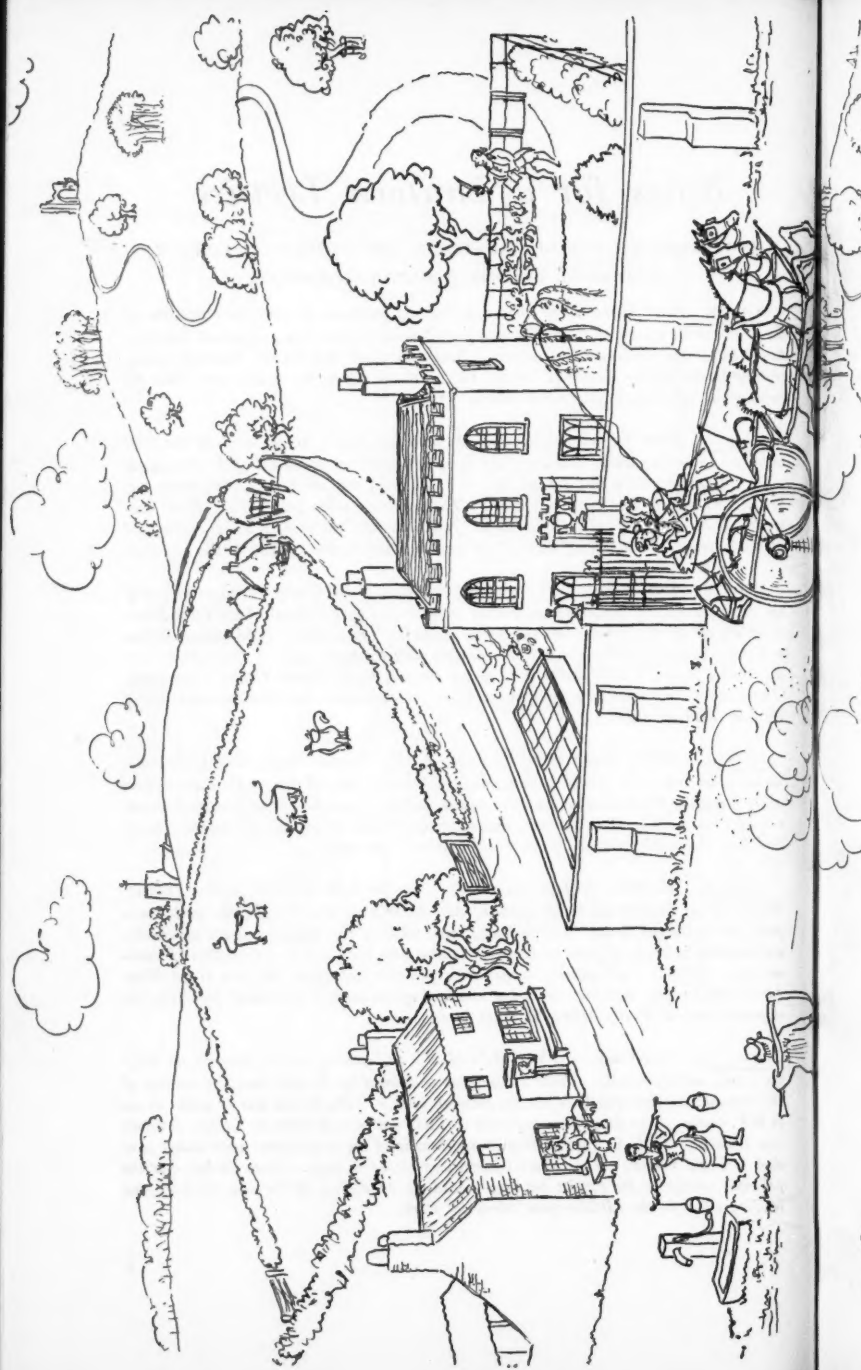
SLIDE 2. *About the year 1830: when the villa had passed, on the death of the poet, to his only surviving sister. Owing to the slump in land values at the end of the Napoleonic wars (combined with a bad run of luck at Crockfords) the 7th Lord Littlehampton has been forced to sell land for development. The adjoining villa, No. 2 Park Road, was erected to the design of Mr. Papworth for Josiah Grindle, the well-known dry-salter and philanthropist. To the left of the road one sees the bailiff's cottage put up in this very year.*

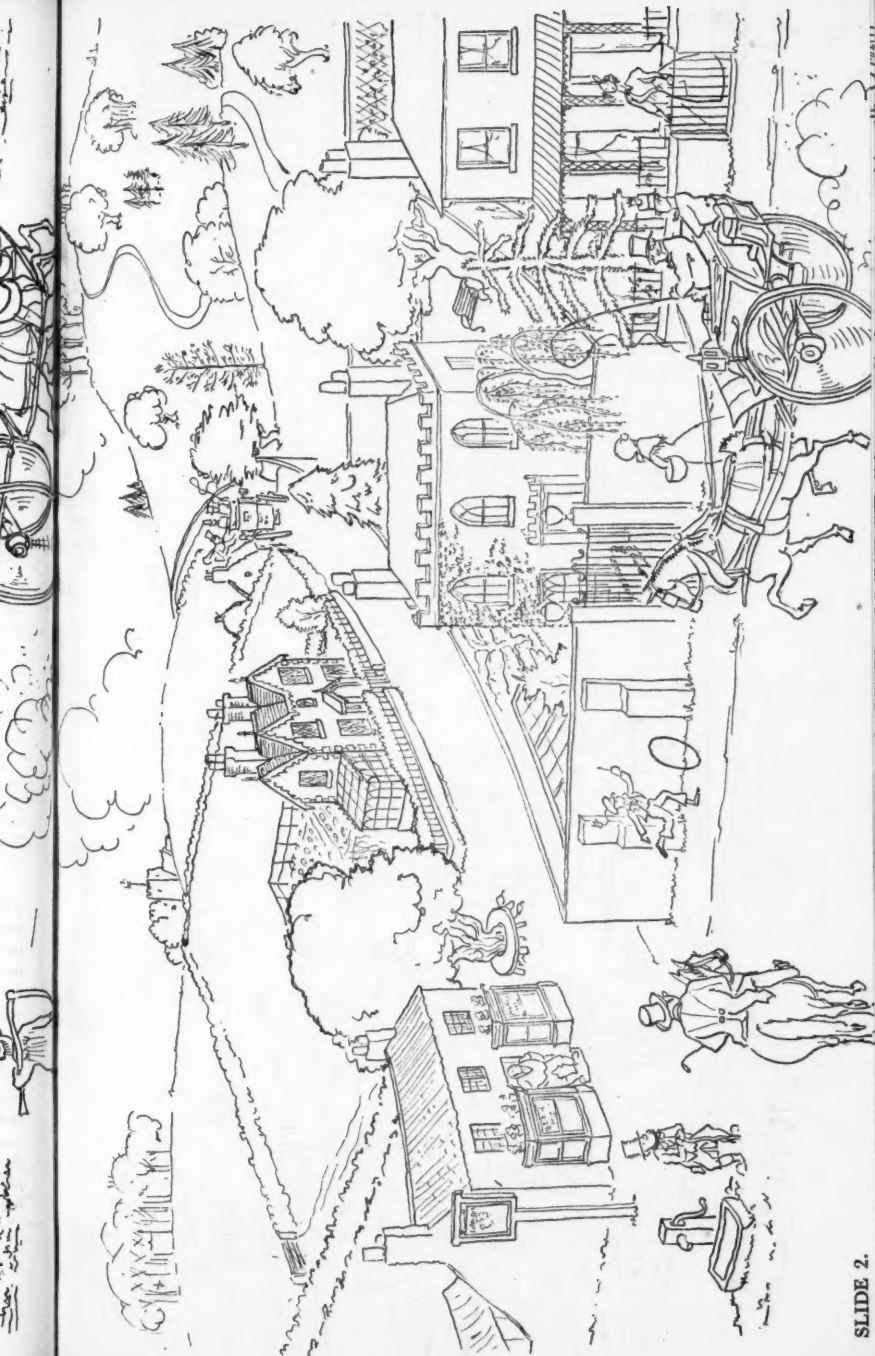
SLIDE 3. *About 1860: shortly after the completion of the London-Horsham section of the Railway. Lord Littlehampton, further impoverished by the repeal of the Corn Laws, is selling off all his property this side of the viaduct. The building of the railway station a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile down the road to the left is tending to shift the focal centre of Draynefleete from the market square, a mile and a half nearer London, to the Poets' Corner Cross-roads. The fountain was erected by public subscription to commemorate the victorious conclusion of the war with Russia.*

SLIDE 4. *1890: shortly before the death of Miss Amelia Tipple, niece of the poet, in her 92nd year. Sir Josiah Grindle, the 2nd Baronet, had left No. 2, Park Road some years previously for a house in Loundes Square and let it on a long lease to a local draper named Pink. 'The Duke's Head' was completely rebuilt in 1895. All Saints' Church had been thoroughly restored by Sir Gilbert Scott in the 70's.*

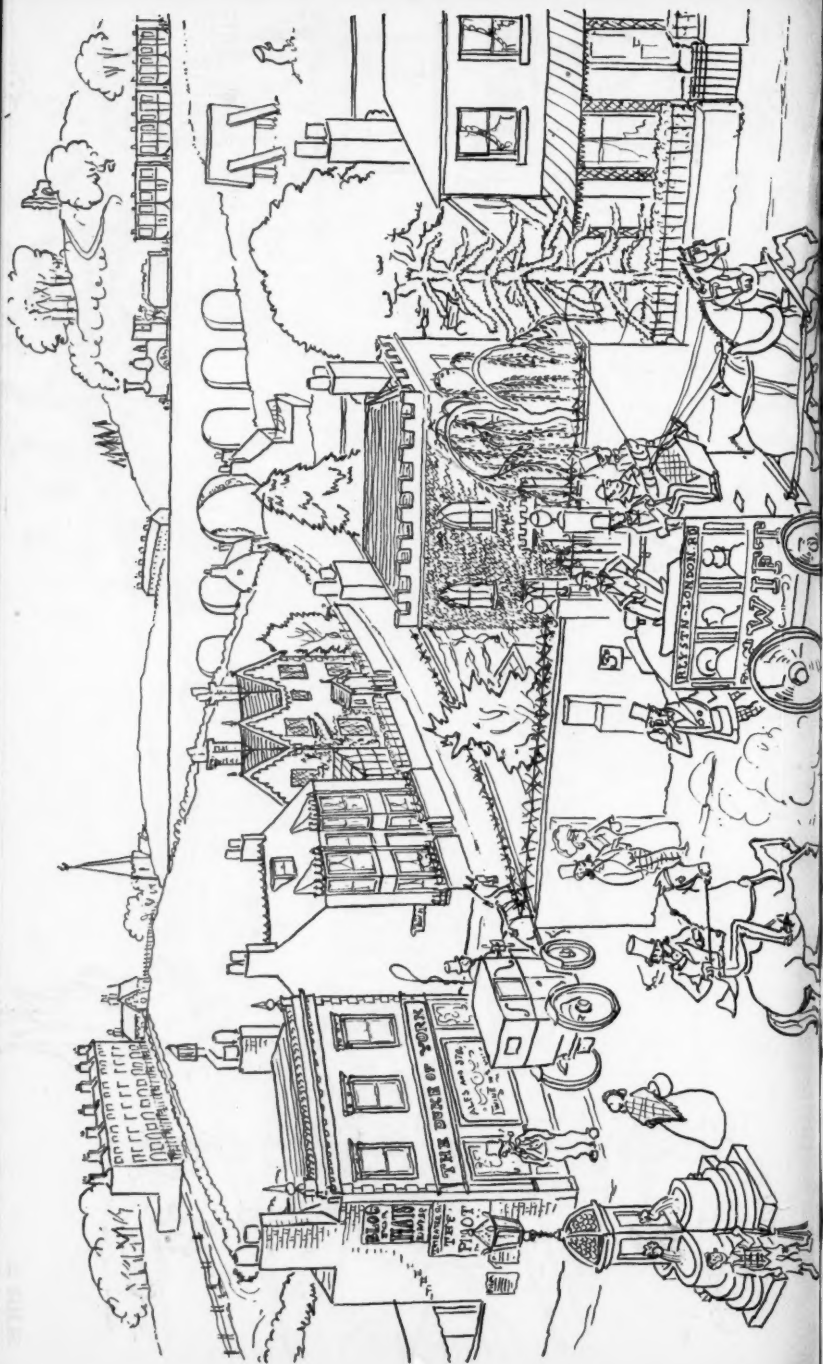
SLIDE 5. *Middle 20's of present century. On the death of Miss Jemima Tipple, Poets' Corner had passed to her nephew, Mr. Casimir de Vere-Tipple, the well-known poet and contributor to the 'Yellow Book,' who, when he was obliged to leave the country unexpectedly in 1895, disposed of the property at a very low figure to a local firm of stonemasons. Messrs. Pink entirely rebuilt their premises just before the first Great War. Lord Littlehampton had presented what remained of his park to the Local Authorities as a public gardens shortly before his death in 1905.*

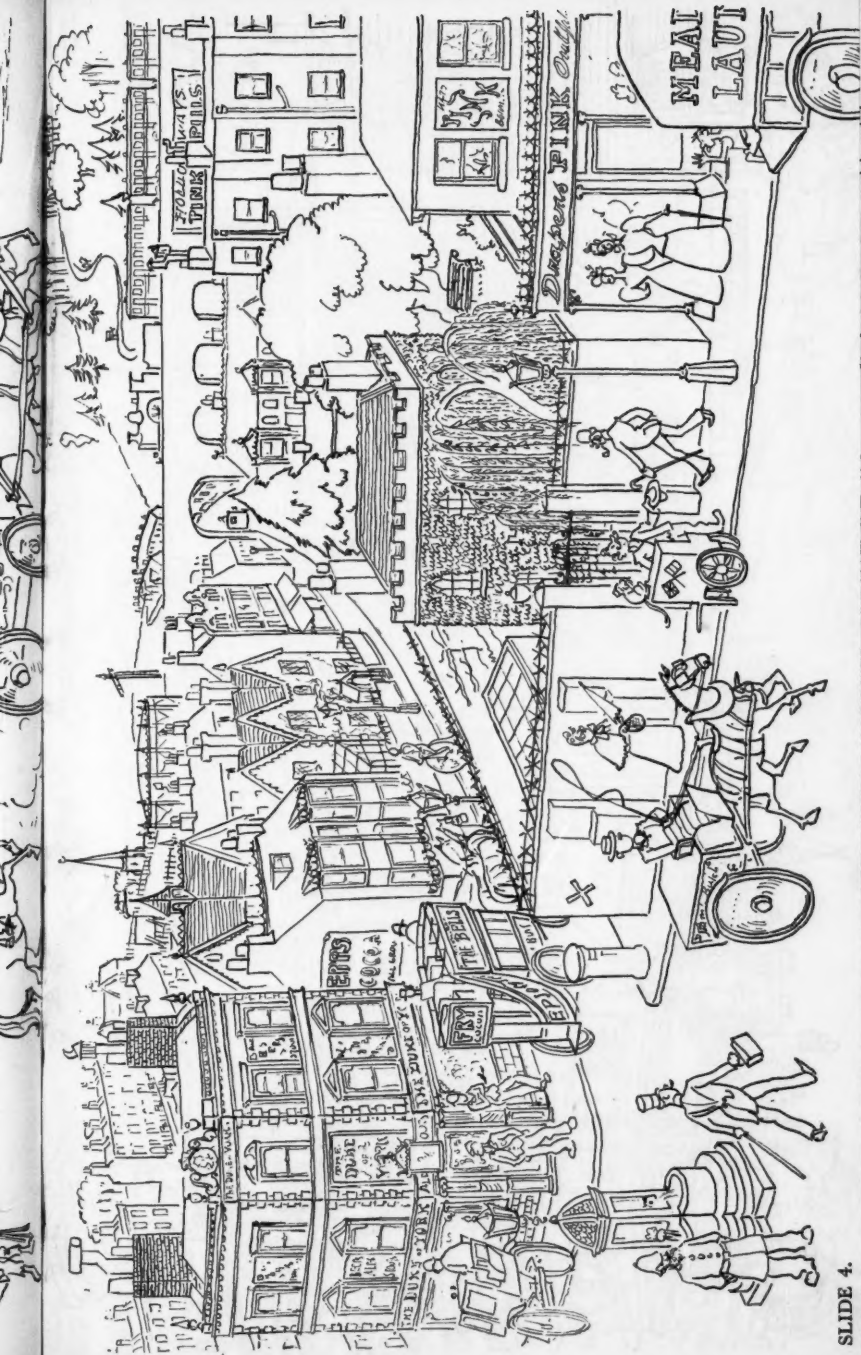
SLIDE 6. *Present day. 'The Duke's Head,' on becoming a tied house in the early 30's, was entirely rebuilt. Poets' Corner was abandoned by the last surviving member of the stonemasons' firm shortly before the outbreak of war. During the war it served as an A.R.P. centre. The dangerous cross-roads was widened in 1936 when the Crimea fountain was removed. Early in 1941 a large bomb demolished the confectioners immediately next door to Poets' Corner. The Odium Cinema was opened in 1937. Since the last war the principal change in the district has been caused by the erection of the new pre-fabricated housing estate in the Littlehampton Memorial Park.*



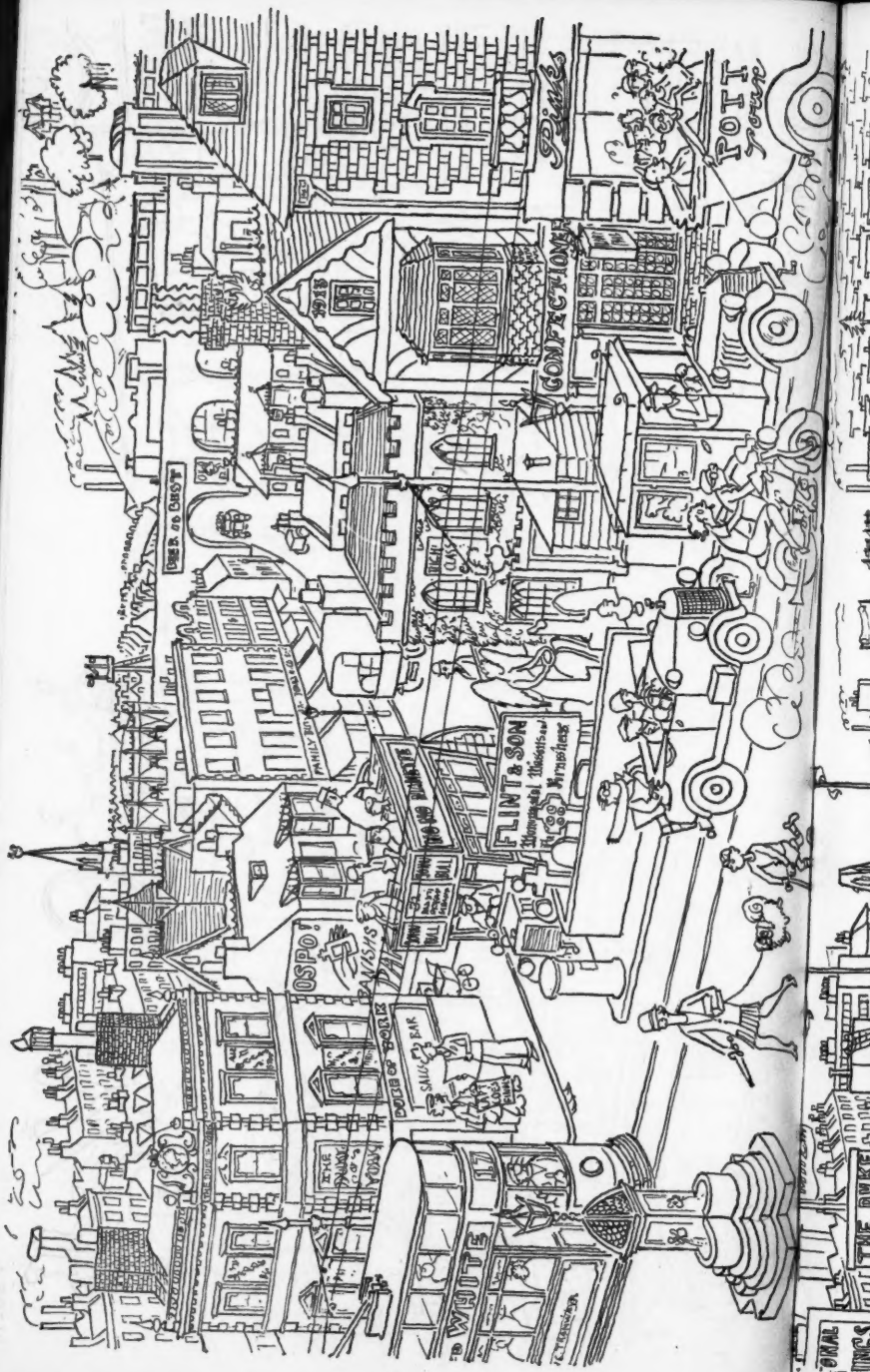


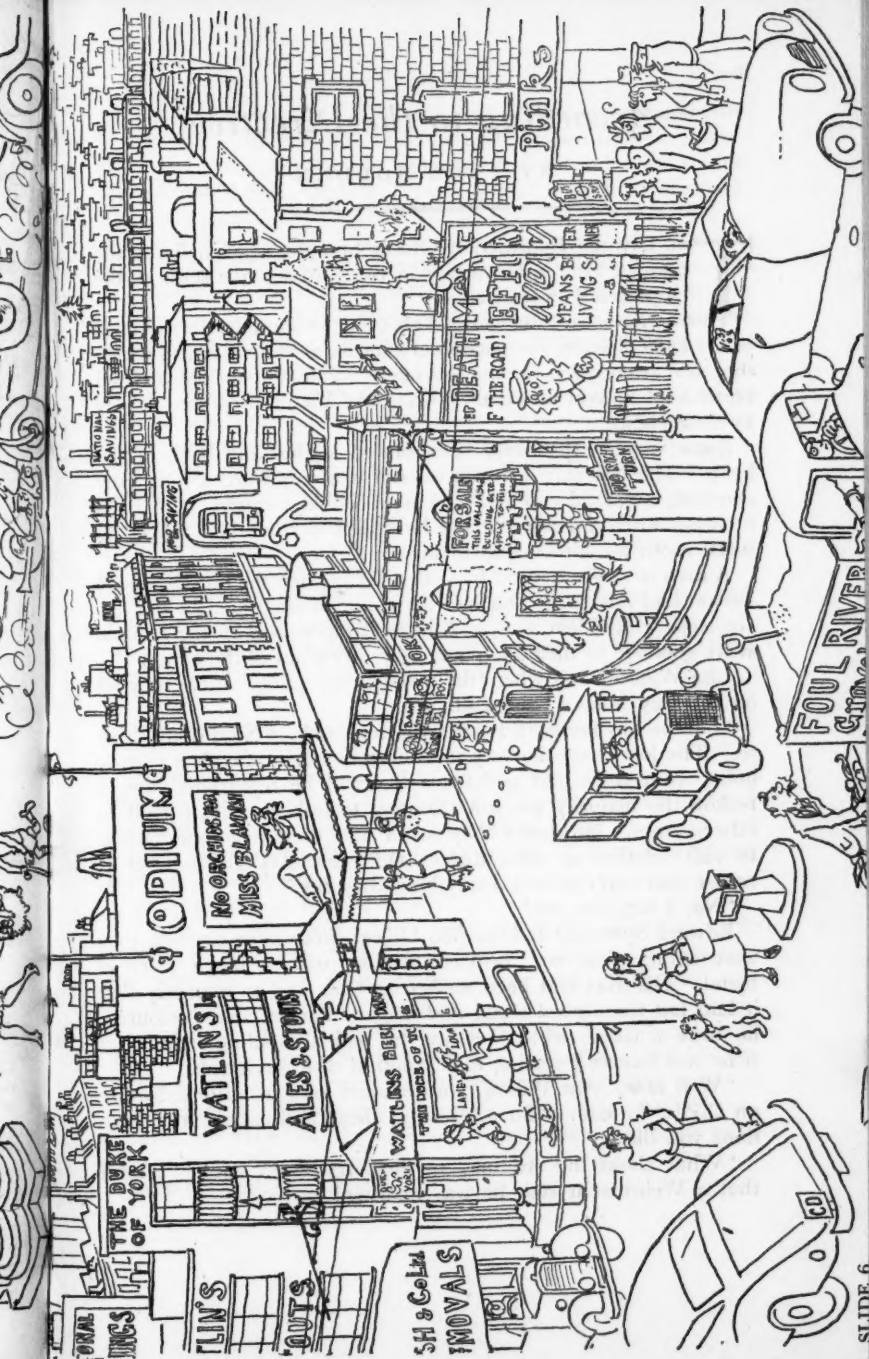
SLIDE 2.





SLIDE 4.





According to the Directive

BY INEZ HOLDEN

THE day the Information Officer brought a journalist to the camp a lorry was waiting in the yard to take some of the Displaced Persons away.

Those who were leaving stood shoulder to shoulder in the back of the lorry clasping the packets of chocolates and cigarettes which they had been given for the journey. Some of them also carried bunches of flowers which they held, like Victorian posies, closely to their chests.

Some wooden steps had been placed against the back of the lorry. The last man to walk wearily upwards wore a long grey overcoat, a peaked cap and dark blue civilian trousers, he carried a cheap cardboard suitcase and he smiled as the others moved to make room for him beside them.

A man in uniform stood by with a list ; when the last Displaced Person had answered, and had his name checked against the list, the steps were taken away. A little group waited in the yard to wave goodbye to their friends as they drove out of the camp.

Lisa Wilson asked where the people were going. 'Are they all on the way home?' she said.

'On the way home,' Edward Syler repeated. 'No, I don't think so. The lorry's on the way to Hanover, maybe there's a convoy going from there and perhaps a few will be repatriated, but I reckon the majority are just planning to link up with friends in other camps. No doubt they've all said they've got permission to visit relatives in some distant D.P. Assembly Centre, but of course you can't believe everything they say.'

'No, I suppose not.'

Edward Syler, the Information Officer, wore pince-nez but they were strong pince-nez, bridged together with a tough piece of metal. His shirt had been washed so often and so earnestly that it had lost its original khaki and become almost cream coloured, he wore a faded field-jacket and he had a shouting manner as if he was forever lecturing to a group of deaf foreigners.

'Well now, Miss Wilson, you've come here to write a feature on D.P.'s,' he said. 'So you just go ahead and ask me any questions you like.'

'What about the last man in the lorry,' Lisa said. 'Wasn't that a Wehrmacht coat he was wearing?'

'Yes, I guess so. As I told you I used to be in this Camp myself as a Welfare Officer. That Italian guy was already here when I arrived, I remember he had some story about being forced into the German Army—anyhow, he went on wearing his Wehrmacht overcoat on cold days because he didn't have any other coat—of course he must have been an ex-enemy alien when he first came into the camp and according to the directive he wouldn't have been entitled to D.P. status—we used to get all sorts here you know, Poles, Balts, Turks and one or two types claiming British or American citizenship. Why we even had Menonites.'

'Menonites, what are they?'

'Oh, they're an agricultural community, they mostly came from Russia, they'd been driven right across two continents and finally landed up here. They don't believe in war.'

'How do you mean they don't believe in war? They must have noticed that something of the sort was going on around them.'

'Oh, sure, they noticed that there was some shooting, many of them were killed, but they don't take an active part in war themselves. Their religion forbids it.'

As Syler and Lisa walked slowly across the courtyard Syler said, 'I thought we'd go across to the Sick Bay, you might get a story there.' He rattled through some statistics and then he said, 'Well, I reckon you're familiar with the overall D.P. situation in Germany right now.'

Lisa wondered where Syler came from. 'Are you an American?' she asked him.

'An American? Hell no,' he said. 'I was born in Tokyo and educated in Heidelberg, but both my parents were of British nationality though I've spent a number of years in the United States. My second wife came from Florida. I've never regretted marrying an American.'

'Is your wife in Europe now?'

'I dunno,' Syler said. 'We were divorced some while back. Well, here's the Camp Sick Bay, but of course there are only convalescents here. We have a directive to send all serious cases straight to the hospital in the town.'

There were sixteen beds in the Sick Bay but only four of them were occupied. One man was sitting on the edge of his bed, he wore a check shirt and grey flannel trousers. His black hair was parted in the middle, his eyes were dark with a melancholy expression, but he smiled all the time as if to show that he knew, more than anyone else, what was going on around him.

'Another Italian?' Lisa asked.

'No, a Frenchman,' Syler said.

At the far end of the room a man with a blackened face and close-cropped hair leant back against the coarse cotton of his pillow reading in a low tone from a book which he held in both hands as if afraid that someone might try to take it from him. He did not look up as Edward and Lisa came in but continued to read, his lips moving rapidly and his eyes, which were red-rimmed and distressingly bloodshot, staying open all the time.

On the other side of the room a fair-haired boy, propped up by two pillows, lay back with both his eyes closed.

Near the entrance, and opposite the check-shirted Frenchman, an old man, with frail transparent hands and a long thin face, was sitting up in bed. Edward Syler walked over to him.

'Well, Monsieur Dumaine,' Syler said. 'How are you getting on?'

Dumaine inclined his head graciously and answered in French. He said that he was not getting the right diet. 'Some of the food I eat now is not at all good for me in my enfeebled state.'

The check-shirted convalescent on the bed opposite gave a contemptuous smile.

The old man went into elaborate explanations of the kind of diet which, he believed, would suit him best. 'Diet,' he said, 'is a very subtle and important thing. We live by what we eat, and, in fact, it affects all our thoughts. But I shall recover quickly when I have all I need. On Monday I take the train to Paris.'

'But it is not certain that you will be able to go to France,' Syler told him.

'Why not?' Dumaine asked sharply.

Syler looked round the room as if seeking some help from the convalescents, but the man with the blackened face still muttered on at the same speed and in the same tone, the fair-haired boy kept his eyes closed and the man in the check shirt did not give up his sneering smile.

'Well, Monsieur Dumaine,' Syler said. 'You had better see the French liaison officer, he will explain all the circumstances.'

'Circumstances,' Dumaine said. 'I have no need to be told anything about them. I know my own circumstances only too well—who better?' But after these words the old man's thoughts seemed to wander away from the camp and the convalescents' room. He began to talk about his farm in France. 'We had plenty of cheese there,' he said. 'Cheese and butter,' and with one thin hand he made a swirling movement round and round as if he was churning butter in a bowl. 'And when I am there

again I shall make more cheese and butter and look after animals and so become a farmer as before.'

The check-shirted convalescent on the bed opposite laughed softly.

The fair-haired boy had opened his eyes and he was leaning on his elbow staring. Syler walked over to him. 'Well, Harry,' he said. 'How's the rheumatism?'

'It's better, thank you,' the boy answered. 'But I sleep a lot.'

'Ah, that's what you want,' Syler said in his shouting manner. 'Plenty of rest and you'll soon be all right. Now here is Miss Wilson, a journalist from London, to see you.'

'I'm from London, too,' said the boy. 'I was born there in Castle Street.' He was silent for a few moments nervously touching the covers of a book lying on the bed.

'What have you been reading there?' Syler asked.

'World History,' the boy told him. 'But in the Red Cross Club last month I was reading an illustrated paper. There were some pictures of cadets training. It shows that they do accept boys of my age as soldiers. I should like to join the British Army now.'

'He's been reading about Sandhurst,' Syler explained. 'It's true, isn't it, Harry, that you walked here all the way from Danzig?'

'From Danzig. Yes.'

'Without food or water?'

'No,' the boy said. 'I had some water to drink on the way.'

'How many days did it take?'

'It took ten days,' Harry answered.

'A long journey.'

'Yes, it was a long journey.'

The camp doctor came in. The check-shirted man stood up. Dumaine, looking forward to further conversations about his diet, waved his hand in greeting, but the man with the blackened face went on reading aloud.

'Come on,' Syler said. 'Let's get out of here.'

As they walked across the courtyard Syler said, 'I keep asking them questions. Maybe you can pick up a story from some of their talk.'

'Yes,' Lisa said. 'Maybe I can. Will the boy Harry be able to go back to England soon?'

'No, I don't think so. You see,' Syler said, 'his father was killed in the Wehrmacht, his mother died during an air raid on Hamburg, the boy says he was born in Castle Street, London, but there's no trace of him in that district at all. The British haven't

accepted him for citizenship, he has no relatives, no friends, no proof of how his early life was spent, so he must wait in the camp till all these questions have been cleared up.'

'How old is he?'

'It is believed that he has just passed his fourteenth birthday.'

'Oh, I see. Too young to decide his own future.'

'It's not so much a question of age as of nationality. You see, he's the son of a German father, and, as far as we know, of a German mother, he speaks perfect English and he wants to be British, but that doesn't make him British. If there was no definite ruling on this sort of thing we'd be snowed under with Germans claiming to be British. You'd be surprised how many Germans want to be British, nowadays.'

'I daresay. What about Dumaine? He seems to think he'll be going back to France on Monday.'

'Yes, he thinks so, but he won't be going. You see, according to an U.S.F.E.T. directive, all Western Nationals must return to their homes before the fifteenth of this month. That's next Monday. Their alternative is to join the German economy with its certainty of lower rations and likelihood of unemployment.'

'It sounds harsh.'

'Yeah, but it isn't. It only applies to a few hundred D.P.s, French, Dutch, Belgians, and so on. They can't have any reason for staying here unless they've been collaborators.'

'Then why can't Dumaine go back?'

'Because he's a collaborator. In any case there's some uncertainty about his nationality, it's being investigated right now. He speaks French and German equally well. Mostly he speaks a mixture of both. He may be German. Of course it's true what he says about his farm in France. But I don't suppose he'll ever see it again.'

'But surely a feeble old man of eighty years old wouldn't be likely to start a Fascist revival wherever he went?'

'No, but you see Dumaine's war work rules him right out. He was employed by the Todt Organisation. He's quite frank about it himself, he says, "I needed a job so I offered my services to the Germans as an interpreter." Well, the Todt Organisation was a Nazi set-up so Dumaine couldn't be accepted in France now.'

'No, I see that. What will happen to him?'

'If it's proved that he's a German he will be moved to the German refugee hospital about a quarter of a mile from here. Wherever Dumaine goes he'll be the hell of a nuisance. I remember when he came into the camp. He refused, at first, to go

through the usual de-lousing process and he wanted a room of his own and all that sort of thing.'

The winter was over and the sun was shining through the black boughs of three slender trees which had survived the bombardment, grass was already struggling up through the uneven ground giving the edge of the courtyard a green and hopeful look.

'Well, what do you think of the D.P. Camp?' Syler said. 'Can you get a story out of it?'

'I don't know yet,' Lisa answered. 'I was still thinking about the convalescents' room. What about the man in the end bed?'

'Oh, you mean the Bible reader? No one knows who he is. He arrived in the camp with a completely burnt and blackened face and red-rimmed eyes. He still looks the same way, but he was much worse then. He had a brown paper parcel with him and he could only say, "I was in the centre of an explosion." He said it over and over again, in perfect Polish without any accent. The brown paper parcel contained some clean underclothes and a Bible in German—nothing else. So that guy just lies there all day reading the holy scriptures in German, but we think he may be Polish.'

'Will he be sent back to Poland then?'

'Well, according to the directive nationals can return to the country of their origin but we don't know anything of this man's origin—neither does he. A Pole must prove he's a Pole before he can go to Poland. We haven't been able to find anyone who knows the Bible reader and it's doubtful if they could recognise him the way he is now and, of course, we can't expect any help from him, his memory's gone. He is, in fact, now mad.'

'He's a bit beyond the reach of directives then?'

Syler seemed to feel affronted as if he was a man of honour whose sister had just been insulted in public. 'Nothing's beyond the reach of directives,' he said. 'The directives are O.K. They've all been planned on a high level.'

As they made their way towards the Assembly Room they passed a long wooden corridor which connected the sick bay with the main building. The corridor had been divided into a series of small offices and in the centre there was a larger room with wide windows.

'See that room?' Syler said. 'I was responsible for that when I was here. I had it made into a little library.'

There were only two people in the wide windowed room, a young man wearing a Norfolk jacket, and the boots and breeches

of the continental refugee, and a girl with long straight hair who held a book in her hand but did not appear to be reading.

'Of course, there's nobody much there now,' Syler said. 'The rest are working outside, or in the administration of the camp, but that little library has been a big success. The D.P. Committee said it was a grand idea. I fixed for the bookshelves to be six foot along the back and eight foot four along the side walls. We painted them white.'

'Who's the girl in there?' Lisa asked.

'The girl?—Oh, she's Polish, she used to belong to a large family. She told me how they all used to go to a country house each summer—all the aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, cousins and grandparents—they were thirty-seven in all. What d'you know about that? Thirty-seven in one family. But now none are left—all killed or lost, deported by the Russians, killed in air raids or in the Warsaw Rising. 'Course the majority were murdered by the S.S. The girl and her sister were liberated from Auschwitz by the Allies but the sister committed suicide a few weeks later. This girl won't go back to Warsaw, she says she'd be willing to go to the United States but there's no one to sponsor her. I guess she'll have to wait for mass emigration.'

'What about the man—the other D.P. in there?'

'Oh, he's not a D.P., he's an Infiltrator. He was in this camp as a D.P. but he was repatriated to Poland, then he came back here. Maybe he's holding out for Palestine.' Edward Syler peered into the library room. 'Some of the paint's got scratched,' he said sadly. 'Course we were very short of paint in this camp; and that's how it is that some of the Germans' slogans are still up in the passages. This place used to be one of Ley's Labour Ministries you know.'

When Syler took Lisa into the Assembly Room she saw that there was a frieze round the wall of square-shouldered German workers painted in pastel colours, some with hammers or spanners, some with pick-axes and others with spades.

Lisa stared at the large-limbed lifeless figures. 'A bit depressing, aren't they?'

'Sure they're depressing, but we'd need the hell of a lot of paint to paint them out.'

At the end of the room there was a notice board. 'Reminds me of school,' Lisa said.

'Oh, the notice board. There's all kinds of notices up there, the concerts the D.P.s organise for themselves, the elections for the D.P. Commandant, the classes in the D.P. school, and now this

census they're planning to take on how many of those who come from Russian occupied territory are willing to go back there.'

Lisa looked at the notice and saw that someone had scribbled on it in pencil. 'No. Don't want to go back because they take away your food card, and also they hang you.'

Syler stared closely at the notice board through his pince-nez. 'They're very confused right now,' he said. 'We may as well leave this camp if we want to get to the other camp in good time. It's mainly a Transit Camp.'

As they walked towards Syler's car Lisa said, 'What about that dark man in the convalescents' room. I mean the Frenchman—is he going back to France on Monday?'

'Oh, yeah. The guy in the check shirt. Sure he's going, but he doesn't want to. He says he served five years in the French navy and he's been in the French police force too, but the authorities in France sent for him—that was during the occupation, of course—there was some doubt about his activities and they informed him that he wasn't a Frenchman—it seems his mother was Italian. When he told me this story he said, "I can stand a good deal, but when they told me I wasn't a Frenchman that was another matter—I didn't hesitate an instant, I thought if they say I'm an Italian all right I'll be an Italian, and I came voluntarily into Germany." Of course none of this was official—off the record you know—don't quote me. As a matter of fact I wasn't very clear about what had happened to him and nothing he told me made much sense.'

'It looks as if he was as much a collaborator as Dumaine.'

'Oh, no, he comes into the category of "forced worker." There's no evidence that he collaborated with the Germans, he's not a political type at all. He belongs to the criminal class really. You can't believe much he says, he's an experienced liar and very bitter because his nationality was called into question.'

As they entered the yard two men were coming back into the camp from work in the fields, they both wore military mackintosh capes which did not fit them very well and gave them a comic air.

'See those two men?' Syler said.

'Yes.'

'Menonites. Don't believe in war. See?'

When they had been driving for a little while and the camp was out of sight Syler stopped the car and said that he had two bottles of cognac with him. 'Wouldn't go on a trip without liquor,' he said. 'I've brought a glass for you.' He opened the bottle and poured some out for Lisa, but he himself drank out of

the bottle, throwing his head back as if he was a G.I. drinking Coca cola.

'The mortality rate amongst the Anglo-American personnel in Berlin is very high just now,' he said.

'What do they die of?'

'Oh, "mortality rate"—that's just a figure of speech. I mean the guys that get sent home with D.Ts.'

After Syler had drunk some more he began to talk, in a soft voice, about a woman he was planning to meet in Berlin. 'You ought to meet my girl friend,' he said. 'You'd like her, you know, she's sympathetic, that's what she is, sympathetic. To tell you the truth, I aim to marry her.'

'Another American?' Lisa asked.

'No, she's German. Most of her relatives are interned or something, so she's all alone now. She hasn't got anyone but me.' Syler sighed deeply. 'Still, she'll be all right when we're married.'

'Have you got permission already?' Lisa asked.

'Permission?'

'Yes, you do have to get permission before you can marry a German national, don't you? I mean the official consent of your superior officer, according to the directive.'

Syler stared at the bottle of cognac as if it was an enemy. Then he shouted, 'Aw, to hell with the directive. What do I care about directives?' He started up the car, and, peering through his pince-nez at the long white road before him, he drove on in silence to the Transit Camp.

Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume

BY JAMES POPE-HENNESSY

IT was seven o'clock in the evening, and the fields were almost empty. The air smelt of hay as well as of vine-leaves. On either side of the path the vines stretched out in level ranks across the plain. Their leaves, sprayed lately, were flecked with stains of turquoise blue. Outside a cabin in the middle of one of the vineyards, two or three people were stooping over the vines. By the door was a water-pump, worked by a yellow horse that was trudging round and round, and, farther on, a labourer and his son had finished work. They were leaning on their pitchforks of bright wood, looking into the sunset. In reply to a question of mine, the man pointed up at the shrine of the Sainte-Baume high on the flank of that famous mountain, which stood square on the horizon like a cliff. In the Var, as in the Vaucluse and the Bouches-du-Rhone, mountains look solitary and powerful. By the evening light the Sainte-Baume seemed to control the plain in which we stood, minimising the lofty Gothic structure of Saint-Maximin in the foreground, and integrating the shapeless town beside the church. When you are in the streets in the town of Saint-Maximin, you are not aware of the presence of the Sainte-Baume, away there in the westward distance, the direction of Marseilles. Out in these fields, not a mile from the town's circumference, you notice first the mountain and then the church.

By screwing up my eyes I could just see the place at which the peasant's arm was pointing—a whitish patch between two blackish patches high up on the mountain's side: the cave and chapel of St. Mary Magdalen within their frame of shrubs and trees. In this cave Mary Magdalen is reputed to have led a life of meditation, and there, according to one of the most persistent Christian traditions of Provence, she died. For centuries the legend of her life and death up there on the isolated mountain has sanctified the plain below the Sainte-Baume.

Popular belief attributes the conversion of Provence to the efforts of Mary Magdalen, her brother Lazarus and her sister Martha. The three of them are said to have reached Marseilles by boat from the Holy Land, together with their companions Trophimus and Maximinus. Lazarus, who clearly became confused in the legend

with an actual fifth-century archbishop of Aix of that name, converted Marseilles ; Martha went north to Tarascon and Avignon ; Maximinus founded a church at Aix and Mary Magdalen retired into the mountains beyond that city. For a variety of reasons, many of them obvious, this story, which is comparable to the Somersetshire legends of Saint Joseph of Arimethea at Glastonbury, is not likely to be true. Its truth is not of real consequence. The important point is not whether certain personages mentioned in the gospels made or did not make a lengthy journey to Marseilles by boat, but the fact that the people of Provence believed for centuries that they had done so, and that this area of Southern France, in many ways so pagan, has absorbed the stories of these saints into its daily life. The crypt of the great fortress-abbey of Saint-Victor at Marseilles contains an early altar dedicated to Saint Mary Magdalen. An oratory in which she was said to have prayed was still shown at Aix in the early nineteenth century. The conquest of the Tarasque by Saint Martha is once more annually celebrated at Tarascon beside the Rhone, while the gypsies' pilgrimage to the stalwart church of the Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer remains as popular as in the days when Mistral described it in *Mes Origines*. Throughout western Provence these beliefs and stories linger. They are as much a part of the Provençal countryside as the tangible vestiges—the ruined monuments and broken temples—of the rule of imperial Rome. 'On ne peut mettre le pied sur le sol de Provence sans heurter à chaque pas la mémoire de sainte Marie-Madeleine,' wrote Lacordaire in 1860. Over what were thought to be the relics of this saint, enclosed in a Gallo-Roman sarcophagus of Arles marble, the Dominicans began to build the basilica of Saint-Maximin in the thirteenth century. Left uncompleted two hundred years later, this great church remains the only major Gothic monument in Provence.

II

Stories of Saint Mary Magdalen's activities in Provence do not seem to have been widely circulated before the tenth, or at best the ninth, century—there is again a parallel here with the date at which the Glastonbury saga of Saint Joseph of Arimethea gained currency in the west of England. Towards the end of the eleventh century ('soit qu'il y eut bonne foi, soit qu'il y eu industrie,' remarks Lacordaire) the monks of Vézelay in Burgundy declared that the body of Saint Mary Magdalen lay under the high altar of that abbey. A pilgrimage, forbidden by the bishop of the diocese but subsequently authorised by the Pope, developed. Soon pilgrims

from all over Europe were swarming towards Vézelay, which became a centre for the preaching of the Second and the Third Crusades. To explain the presence of the saint's body in Burgundy the monks of Vézelay pointed out that it had first lain at Saint-Maximin in Provence, but had been taken north for safety at the time of the Saracen invasion. This was an unwise explanation, for it provoked a search carried out in the year 1279 at Saint-Maximin, which resulted in the discovery of a rival body of the saint. This search, conducted in the presence of Saint Louis' nephew, Charles de Provence, unearthed a sarcophagus of marble in the crypt of the old Cassianite church. Opened with great pomp in the presence of two archbishops, the sarcophagus was found to contain a skeleton, and with the skeleton a piece of bark ostensibly dated 710 and stating that the body of Saint Mary Magdalen had been removed from an alabaster coffin to this marble one, and hidden from the Saracens. At the directions of Charles de Provence the body was divided into three parts—the skull (to which a piece of apparently living flesh was still adhering) was placed in a golden reliquary with a crystal mask over the face; the right arm was enclosed in a reliquary of silver-gilt supported by four silver-gilt lions; while the rest of the skeleton was laid in a silver casket. The king of Naples and Sicily, father of Charles de Provence, sent his own jewelled crown to be placed upon the skull, which was then taken to Rome and shown to the Pope, Boniface VIII, who gave the relics his official recognition and authorised the construction of a large church, to be looked after by the Dominican order, at Saint-Maximin in the County of Provence.

From the thirteenth century onwards, the pilgrimage to Saint-Maximin, and to the neighbouring cave of the Sainte-Baume, increased in volume and in popularity. Louis XI, the first king who ruled Provence as well as France, pronounced Mary Magdalen to be a French saint—'une fille de France.' Charles VIII and Louis XII continued to encourage the cult. Anne of Brittany sent a golden statuette of herself to be placed near the golden reliquary which held the holy skull. François I, Charles IX and Louis XIII all contributed to the embellishment of the church and of the grotto; while Louis XIV was the last reigning French monarch to pay homage in person at *les Saints Lieux de Provence*. The monastery attached to the church became, and remained, exceedingly prosperous, until, at the outbreak of the Revolution, it was shut. In 1793 the chapel of the Sainte-Baume in the mountain was destroyed at the orders of Barras, but the church, though pillaged and

scheduled for demolition, was saved. Another rather dubious Provençal tradition ascribes the saving of the church to Lucien Bonaparte, then resident in 'Marathon' (the Revolutionary name for Saint-Maximin) and married to the inn-keeper's sister. According to his own story, given in his memoirs, 'Brutus' Bonaparte saved many of the Saint-Maximinois and their wives from the guillotine at Orange. He does not mention the church (which he is supposed to have saved by ordering it to be used as a warehouse) and the general tone of his memoirs suggests that had he preserved this building he would certainly have drawn attention to the fact. Subsequently auctioned as national property the basilica was sold quite cheaply to a Madame Tan, who returned it to the Church authorities at the Restoration. In 1859 it was bought back by the Dominicans, an order just revived in France. It was at this moment, and because of this re-purchase, that the church of Saint-Maximin and its rather misty traditions inspired the most popular of the written works of the great leader of the Dominican revival, the preacher Lacordaire.

III

Born of a bourgeois family in the Burgundian countryside near Chatillon-sur-Seine, Lacordaire passed an agnostic youth in Dijon and in Paris, was converted at the age of twenty-one in 1823, and was ordained priest by the archbishop of Paris four years later. At first connected with the *Avenir* movement of his friends Montalembert and Lamennais, he had withdrawn from it at the first signs of Papal disapproval, and in 1835 had been invited by the archbishop to preach from the pulpit of Notre Dame. For the next two years his sermons drew all Paris: his success was as fashionable as that of F. D. Maurice in mid-Victorian London, but also far more widespread. In 1837 he relinquished his appointment at Notre Dame, withdrew to Rome, and was there received with two of his countrymen into the order of the friars of Saint Dominic, an order which had been suppressed in France at the Revolution and had not been revived. The remainder of Lacordaire's life (save for the few days in 1848 in which he functioned as a member of the Chamber of Deputies) was divided between his preaching (he resumed his *conférences* at Notre Dame in 1843) and his carefully planned campaign to reinstate the Dominicans throughout the length and breadth of France. In the autobiographical fragment which he dictated as he lay dying he describes the stages by which the Dominicans had been reinstated in that country:—the first small house at Nancy, the second establishment in the deserted

convent of Chalais near Grenoble, the third at Flavigny not far from Dijon, the fourth in Paris and so on. In September 1859 this steady infiltration culminated in the solemn re-entry of the Dominicans into the famous monastery and austere basilica of Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume. To celebrate this climax of his life's work, and to try to revive the pilgrimages to *les Saints Lieux de Provence*, Lacordaire sat down and composed the best-known of his writings, *La Vie de Sainte-Marie-Madeleine*.

Even in his own day, Lacordaire's sermons were criticised for their lack of logic and faulty reasoning: no one tried to deny their extraordinary emotional power. The same criticisms have been levelled at his book on Saint Mary Magdalen, for he accepted every story of her presence in Provence without hesitation, and even openly regretted that the '*Noli me Tangere*,' the piece of skin upon the skull at Saint-Maximin which was said to be the mark of the hand of Christ, had been lost in the eighteenth century. To-day this excessive credulity seems as unimportant as that of the Provençaux themselves, for *La Vie de Sainte-Marie-Madeleine* can be read with enjoyment for two quite extraneous reasons:—the splendid disquisition upon the sublimity of Friendship, and the descriptive passages on the Sainte-Baume and on Provence.

The works of the great often abound in beauties of which the authors themselves may well have been quite unaware. Just as you may read Carlyle for the shimmering gem-like portraits of his contemporaries with which his prose-works are studded, so you may read Lacordaire for his descriptions of French scenery instead of for his Christian apologetics. Born and brought up in the same landscape as Lamartine, Lacordaire had a similar passion for the French countryside and a similar sensibility towards its perfections. His description in his autobiography of the ruined monastery at Chalais is, for instance, very fine. He applied this descriptive gift with an especial passion to Provence. His certainty that a saint whom he venerated had lived and died in this richly southern land gave impetus to his natural enthusiasm for it—a country which he compared to some promontory of Greece or Italy thrust out towards the Mediterranean, '*cette mer qui baigne tous les rivages fameux*.' With certain creative natures, as with certain lovers, the actual truth or value of that by which they are inspired is of secondary interest, the essential factor being the strength and the expression of the emotions which are thus released.

Good landscape writing, like good landscape painting, makes public a personal interpretation of the place portrayed, and thus enhances the general appreciation of it, providing, as it were, a

new lens through which others can look. Provence, which has been so much painted, provides numerous instances—what Van Gogh did for Arles, what Cezanne did for the environs of Aix, or Corot for Avignon and for Villeneuve. Now, you could not place Lacordaire, a great preacher and a great spiritual force, but a sentimental, minor writer, on a level with any of these ; yet his descriptions of the view from the terrace of the Sainte-Baume, looking down towards Saint-Maximin, and his descriptions of the country round the church and monastery shed on these landscapes a kind of lustre as soft and warm as the light of a summer evening in the Var. A strange excitement throbs through his descriptive passages. And who has more exactly caught the sudden shock of that intoxicating experience—a first entry into Provence ? ‘ Lorsque le voyageur descend les pentes du Rhone,’ he writes, ‘ à un certain moment, sur la gauche, les montagnes s’écarternt, l’horizon s’élargit, le ciel devient plus pur, la terre plus somptueuse, l’air plus doux : c’est la Provence.’

IV

If you approach Saint-Maximin from Draguignan, as I did, it seems a loose and undistinguished-looking place. Draguignan, a hill town with a barracks in it, has steeply tilted streets as narrow as a coffin. Saint-Maximin is wide and flat. It is a very small town, to most intents and purposes a village. An air of impermanence, even of makeshift, hovers uncertainly about the central square. It seems a town in which people change buses, but do not stay to live. At one end of the *place* (inevitably called the *Boulevard Jean-Jaurès*) are trees, and under the trees, benches. There is also an eighteenth century fountain with a stiff obelisk above it. On to the obelisk is jammed a clumsy four-faced clock. The main hotel is a crouching, comfortable building with shrubs in painted pots outside its windows, and to the right-hand of the doorway a long kitchen in which big copper saucepans give an orange gleam. Saint-Maximin has all the qualities one might associate with a pilgrim town.

‘ Saint Maximin,’ wrote Prosper Mérimée from the inn there, in September 1834, ‘ est un misérable trou entre Aix et Draguignan.’ He was forced to spend the night in the town, since he could get no horses to take him back to Aix. His visit to Saint-Maximin took up one day of a four-month tour of the monuments, libraries and museums of the Midi, a part of his regular duties as Inspector-General of the Historical Monuments of France. Mérimée was at this time thirty-one and already wellknown. He was a quiet, furtive-looking young man, with small sharp eyes and a disagreeable

expression. He detested his journeys in the provinces, and would describe himself in letters to his friends in Paris as 'victimised' by the provincials, who treated him as a celebrity as well as an official, bored him with their egotism and their coin collections, and exhausted him with long climbs in church belfries and walks uphill to see some 'prehistoric' stone. He had not been in Provence before this visit, and he found the inns particularly nasty. He said they smelt of oil and garlic, that there were rats in the bedrooms and bugs in the beds. The roads, along which he jolted in a succession of carts, carriages and pony-traps, were atrocious. The conditions in which educated, upper-class people lived in towns such as Arles or Avignon amazed him—their houses squeezed in between a tannery stinking of raw hides and a busy laundry, and their front doors swinging open on to squalid ill-paved streets. He came to the conclusion that what this part of France needed was dictatorship.

Mérimée had been to Vézelay in August, and now he had come to see the alternative sepulchre of Mary Magdalen. In his private letters he expressed great disappointment at the uncompleted state of the great church. 'Il y a une grande église,' he wrote to Jenny Dacquin, 'à laquelle il ne manque qu'une façade, des tours, un clocher et autres menus details. Je me suis laissé prendre à ce *regular humbug* et je ne puis sortir de Saint-Maximin faute de chevaux.' In the little book, *Notes d'un Voyage dans le Midi de la France*, which he published in 1835, Mérimée was more lenient to Saint-Maximin. He admitted that its local celebrity was well justified by its size and by the height of the three naves and the elegance of the apse, though he could not resist a gibe at the absence of a west front. In contrast to the abbey at Vézelay, which he had found almost derelict, the church at Saint-Maximin was well looked after. He was impressed by the 'belle teinte sombre' of the interior, very noticeable at an epoch in which every church in France was being whitewashed, and he found that it was the personal courage of the curé which had saved the church from the painters' hands. When they had arrived with their buckets and brushes, Père Logier had locked the doors of the church, preferring temporarily to excommunicate the inhabitants of Saint-Maximin rather than see the church's interior spoiled. Mérimée, who had been waging a lonely fight against the prevailing pious bad taste, held him up as an example of æsthetic wisdom. He said, too, that it was the curé who was responsible for the perfect state of the famous seventeenth-century choir-stalls of Saint-Maximin which, like the Louis Quinze pulpit and the rococo stucco work over the high altar, were as clean as they could be. Père Logier cleaned

and polished all the woodwork himself—'Do you think,' he asked his visitor, 'that I would let ignorant hands touch these beautiful things?' Mérimée was so much taken with the priest's zeal and intelligence that when he sat down that night to write a report to his Minister, he asked him to send a picture to Saint-Maximin. 'Il n'y a pas une église en France qui soit plus digne de recevoir des objets d'art,' he commented. Praise from Prosper Mérimée was rare.

V

The exterior appearance of Saint-Maximin has changed little in the one hundred and fourteen years since Mérimée's visit. Perhaps it is the fact that there are no other great Gothic buildings in south Provence that makes this vast basilica seem so formidable and so pale. Around and above the great west door the walls rise grey and raw. Between the cracks of the unfinished masonry sturdy green plants are sprouting, to strain and quiver as the mistral blows. The chain of saints on the west door were hacked flat at the time of the French Revolution. Their ovoid, featureless faces and sliced-off limbs seem somehow in character with the uncompleted state of the façade. North of the church, at right angles to it, stands the Hôtel de Ville, a pretty seventeenth-century *pavillon* which once formed part of the monastic precincts. The monastery itself, lying between church and *pavillon*, has been somewhat reconstructed in the nineteenth century and houses Lacordaire's Dominicans. Aquiline and tonsured, these friars stride about the streets of the town in their white serge habits, their abruptly energetic movements hampered by their skirts. At the east end of the church are some farm stables, and on the south, opposite the monastery, is a miniature dusty square, presided over by a strong plane tree. On the July morning when I went to see the basilica, a haywain stood against one wall of the square. It stood there in the shadow, as though sheltering from the heat. For the heat, like the silence round the church, was total, and as so often in Provence the heat seemed fierce and the silence sinister. Far up over the roof some swallows circled and dipped across the buttresses.

Inside, the basilica is unkempt and damp. There are few more melancholy sights in Provence than the present condition of this splendid church, in which the severity of the Gothic nave was once relieved by a great wealth of shimmering baroque work—Lieutaud's choir-stalls carved in 1692, the pulpit, the organ-case, the frieze of plaster cherubim over the altar. All these objects are still in place, but much dilapidated: the woodwork is worm-eaten, and the stucco

crumbling and mildewed, falling in dirty flakes upon the chancel floor. An interesting Renaissance altar-piece, painted for the church in 1520 and containing the first recorded view of the Palais des Papes at Avignon, is so filthy that you can scarcely see it. The praise which Prosper Mérimée bestowed upon the curé of 1834 would certainly not be merited by the modern sacristan, or the authorities now responsible for the upkeep and the preservation of this church. The basilica seems, indeed, to be in much the same state as when Lacordaire wrote of it in 1859: 'debout encore, mais pauvre, nu, désolé, tout couvert des cicatrices du siècle qui s'est plu aux ruines, comme les autres s'étaient plus dans l'édification.' For Lacordaire's campaign to revive the popularity of *les Saints Lieux de Provence* has not outlived his century. That century, in any case, provided Catholic France with new saints of its own. The medieval cult of Mary Magdalen, the repentant sinner, gave way to that of the schoolchild Bernadette at Lourdes or the nun Thérèse at Lisieux. Only within Provence itself has devotion to the Saint-Baume survived. Its centre is still the crypt of the church of Saint-Maximin. You enter this crypt by a steep, short flight of steps in the north transept.

The crypt of Saint-Maximin is even more cramped than most. What space there is in it seems taken up by four fine Gallo-Roman sarcophagi, probably of Arlesian origin, which have low bass-reliefs carved along their sides. These sarcophagi are those unearthed in 1279 by Charles de Provence, and since then officially regarded as the receptacles of the bodies of Mary Magdalen, Maximin, Sidonia and Trophimus. At the end of the crypt is an illuminated niche protected by a sheet of glass. Behind the glass, and on a shelf, stands an ormolu head of a woman with long hair, over life-size. The face of this reliquary, which, made in 1860, replaces the thirteenth-century one lost in the Revolution, can be removed like a lid, and lies propped against the wall of the niche. This arrangement reveals a brittle, blackish skull, which contrasts sharply with the smooth and Second-Empire features of the golden face beside it. This is the skull which has been regarded for seven centuries as that of Saint Mary Magdalen.

To Lacordaire this little crypt was 'the third most important tomb in Christendom.' To the sceptical Church historian Duchesne it was a typical burial-vault of some rich local family of the fifth or sixth century. The arguments for and against the authenticity of the relics have never been concluded, and one may assume that they never will be. The only thing that seems fairly certain is that this skull, together with a finger and some fragments

of vertebræ, did once form part of the female body disinterred in the thirteenth century, and subsequently revered by pilgrims from all over Europe. Whose body it was, no one can tell. And why should this matter? For these dead bones did more than inspire Lacordaire. They were, in a most literal sense, responsible for the building of the great basilica itself.

VI

To students of Provence, Saint-Maximin has another and a purely accidental, relevance. For it was here that the Emperor Napoleon pronounced his final verdict on the Provençaux. Quoting the narrative of Count Waldbourg-Truchses, one of the Allied Commissioners who went with the ex-Emperor to Elba in 1814, Chateaubriand has repeated the story of Napoleon's alarm on entering Provence. As the cavalcade of carriages had journeyed southwards, the attitude of the people in the villages and towns along the route began to change. It was on the frontiers of Provence that Napoleon first met open threats and insults. At Plan d'Orgon, and on the outskirts of Avignon the Emperor, who had had to disguise himself, had shown some fear. When they reached Saint-Maximin—the town in which his brother Lucien had been married twenty years earlier—Napoleon, now dressed in Austrian uniform, summoned the *sous-préfet* of Aix who was in the town. He upbraided him. He told him he should blush to see the Austrian uniform, and to know that this was his ex-sovereign's only means of protection against the people of Provence. 'C'est un méchant race que les Provençaux,' said Napoleon. 'Ils ont commis toutes sortes d'horreurs et de crimes dans la Révolution et sont prêts a recommencer : mais quand il s'agit de se battre avec courage, alors ce sont des lâches.' Provence, he added, had never given him one regiment of which he could be proud.

Though Napoleon's outburst need not be taken too literally—he was harassed and persecuted when he made it—its implication that the Provençaux are a race apart from other Frenchmen, and a violent and potentially cruel people will seem valid to those who have done much travelling in Provence. 'Les étrangers pensent que c'est un pays doux, mais c'est un pays âpre et féroce,' a man said to me at Les Baux. It is indeed a fierce and bitter country, full of violence and lethargy, perfidy and good nature, full of every contradiction under its burning sun. The pride and respect with which the turbulent country people hold the memory of Saint Mary Magdalen seems merely one example of this contradiction

—for what tale could be more tranquil, what ideal more calm and gentle than that of this slow life of meditation and this quiet death in a grotto on the Sainte-Baume?

(This essay forms part of a book on certain aspects of Provence now in preparation.)

Ruskin and Rose La Touche

BY PETER QUENNELL

THE perplexed sage, the 'disappointed Philanthropist,' the rebellious son and revolutionary Illiberal enjoyed, nevertheless, a single gleam of comfort. Ruskin was in love with Rose La Touche; and Rose, he believed, was not indifferent to his interest. Whatever Rosie might think of 'St. Crumpet'—and he calmed himself by remembering that, from Ireland, to which the La Touche family had now returned, she wrote to him repeatedly—he acknowledged the immense debt that he owed to her soothing, stabilising influence. Elsewhere all was distress and darkness: 'intense scorn' of his previous efforts and 'still intenser scorn of other people's doings and thinkings, especially in religion,' were coupled with the 'perception of colossal power . . . in Titian and of weakness in purism,' a feeling of intolerable loneliness at home, 'only made more painful to me by parental love . . . which was cruelly hurtful without knowing it,' and with 'terrible discoveries in the course of such investigation as I made into grounds of old faith . . . I don't in the least know,' he admitted to Norton during February 1861, 'what might have been the end of it, if a little child (only thirteen last summer) hadn't put her fingers on the helm at the right time, and chosen to make a pet of herself for me, and her mother to make a friend of herself . . . certainly the ablest and I think the best woman I have ever known. . . .' He could not see the La Touches very often. In the summer of 1861, instead of going to Switzerland as was his wont, he remained at Boulogne between the ocean and the sandhills where he looked forward to Rosie's weekly letters, observed the sea and sky, read Greek (because Rose had begun to ask him questions about her Greek Testament) and now and then went out with the local fishermen, admiring their gaiety and courage and robust independence. Would that his own organism were as solidly well-built! . . .

From Boulogne he returned to England in August—but not at once to Denmark Hill. The La Touches had sent him a 'very earnest invitation' to pay them an extended visit; and by the end of the month, passing through Dublin (which 'joins the filth of Manchester to the gloom of Modena, and the moral atmosphere

of St. Giles's) he at length set foot in Harristown, where the children—for it was late in the evening when he arrived—hurried out of bed to see him: Percy, 'barefooted like a little Irishman. . . . Wisie, like Grisi in *Norma*' and Rose, who followed her brother, wearing a 'tiny pink dressing-gown.' They were 'all very happy and very well.' Ruskin played and walked with the children, and conversed amicably with their parents; but it was during this visit that a faint shadow of disquietude began for the first time to colour their relationship. Mrs. La Touche had taken alarm at his religious heresies, and, since she could not persuade him to change his views, she exacted a promise that for the space of ten years he would not seek to propagate them. Ruskin had assented, feeling (as he told his father) that 'it was the only thing I could do for Mrs. La Touche,' who 'would do all she *could* for me.' Lacerta's solicitude was, indeed, conspicuous. She showed a more than sisterly concern with 'poor St. Crumpet's' troubles. 'Nothing (she confessed later to a friend, George MacDonald) will ever get me right, save getting him right—for somehow if he were holding on to a straw and I to a plank, I must leave my plank to catch at his straw. Still, I don't care what becomes of me so long as anyhow he can be brought to some sort of happiness and life. He knows that very well, and is welcome to know it.' She did not, however (as was natural enough), take her friend's devotion to her daughter, now barely adolescent, altogether seriously. Rosie was still a child, she insisted—a fascinating child, no doubt, as she galloped through the park on her pony, her enormous dog beside her, or sat solemnly discussing St. Crumpet or reading the long effusive letters he wrote to her from Boulogne; and Ruskin found that his passionate appreciations of Rose's influence and importance were apt to be received by her mother, otherwise so sympathetic, with gentle incredulity. At times he accepted her point of view; and then he became conscious of his age, of his despondency, exhaustion and 'unfitness for active life,' and decided that the glorious plans he had woven around Rosie must sooner or later be abandoned. On leaving England, he carried the problem abroad, where the cogitations it involved detained him till December. He had had (he wrote to James Ruskin) 'several things to make up my mind about . . . , and under circumstances of some ambiguousness—what my conduct should be to the La Touches was the chief of these: and *that* depended partly on my thoroughly knowing the state of my own health, and partly on my finding out if possible whether Rosie was what her mother and you think her, an entirely simple child, or

. . . in an exquisitely beautiful and tender way, and *mixed* with much childishness,' the subtle and perceptive being whom he himself imagined.

In fact, she was neither one nor the other, but (we may assume) an unusually intelligent child, gifted with a curious, perhaps an almost morbid, sensitiveness to the feelings of the older persons by whom she was surrounded. Both her mother and Ruskin were demanding and possessive characters; and it seems not unreasonable to suggest that the frequent collapses from which Rose La Touche suffered during the period of her adolescence may have been due at least as much as to psychological strain as to physiological weakness. This was a view of the situation that Ruskin himself had considered but rejected. Rose fell gravely ill during the autumn of 1861; and, writing to his father at the beginning of November with the news that she had recovered, though she was still forbidden to write long letters or make any strenuous effort, he assured him that 'Rosie's illness has assuredly *nothing* to do with any regard she may have for me. She likes me to pet her, but it is no manner of trouble when I go away; her affection takes much more the form of a desire to please me and make me happy in any way she can, than of any want for herself, either of my letters or my company.' No doubt he hoped that the want would arise. Meanwhile he was prepared to wait; and, having returned to Switzerland, he settled down once more to the studies he now found most consolatory, slowly and carefully driving a path through various Greek and Latin authors, enjoying the grandeur of Livy and admiring 'Horace's calm and temperate, yet resolute, sadness.' Besides the Augustan poet's attitude towards death, what 'weak nonsense' seemed the pontifications of every modern moralist!

Ruskin's existence, then, between the publication of *Unto This Last* and the spring months of 1864, followed a fairly constant pattern. Still industrious yet relatively unproductive, he paid occasional visits to England but more often was to be discovered moving to and fro across the Continent. Sometimes he was accompanied by friends—by Edward Burne-Jones and his wife: for that engaging young painter now occupied the place in his affections once filled by Rossetti—and sometimes he lived alone, reading and meditating and awaiting Rosie's letters, a 'kingfishery' recluse amid some Alpine solitude. His literary output was small. In 1862, however, encouraged by Froude, the editor of *Fraser's Magazine*, who had written to him admiringly at Carlyle's instigation, he embarked on a new series of economic essays. The result was *Munera Pulveris*, a work which repeated and enlarged the

message of *Unto This Last* and his view of what constituted the real wealth of a people, complicated by some odd touches of mythological fancy. Its reception, alas, was equally discouraging. Only four essays had yet appeared when the publisher of *Fraser's*, like the publisher of the *CORNHILL*, was struck with sudden panic; like Thackeray, Froude gave way, and the work was discontinued. Ruskin staggered beneath this second blow; he was staying at the time in Switzerland and his companion, George Allen, remembered the mood of intense gloom that had enveloped him as soon as word arrived from England, and how, lonely and angry, he had paced for hours on end up and down a terrace-walk. His sense of isolation was proportionately exaggerated; and in isolation the cult of Rose grew increasingly extravagant. No 'rosaceous' detail, no scrap of her handwriting, no anecdote of her behaviour, was too small to hold his interest. But he was never unconscious of the distances that separated them—distances in age and distances in faith; for, although Rose might have been prepared to overlook the fact that St. Crumpet was a middle-aged man (a man, moreover, who, as he complained bitterly, had never learned to 'climb, run, or wrestle, sing, or flirt,' and felt at the same time disturbingly young and prematurely antiquated), it was not likely that she would allow herself, or be allowed by her parents, to contemplate marriage with an infidel. And marriage was now his objective. He had come to believe—it was a recurrent delusion—that he might at length, in spite of all his previous disappointments, be normally, completely happy.

To this end, he had promised Mrs. La Touche he would not propagate his doctrinal errors. Mrs. La Touche, on the other hand, most unfairly or most unfortunately, had permitted Rose to discover that St. Crumpet's religious views were not everything they should have been. The little girl was greatly disturbed. Rosie, he reported in December 1862, was 'mightily vexed about my heathenism, (her mother has let her see some bits of letters I never meant her to see)—and sends me a long little lock of hair, to steady me somewhat if it may be; of sending which, nevertheless, she won't take the grace—or responsibility—herself, but says, "Mama cut it off for you".' Accompanying this gift was a direct appeal '... For the sake of all truth,' she begged, 'and love,' he must not give up 'the one true God—containing all others. ...' No doubt the letters, of which Mrs. La Touche had shown her daughter fragments, were concerned with the revolutionary opinions of the Bishop of Natal, John William Colenso, whose seven treatises on *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined* (which he

had been moved to write by the extreme difficulty of explaining Bible history to his puzzled Zulu converts) began to appear in 1862. Ruskin, of course, sided with the Bishop ; for Colenso's bold stand did much to relieve the burden of his own perplexities. But the La Touche family, as believers in the literal accuracy of both Testaments, were much aggrieved and scandalised ; and Mrs. La Touche's distress over her friend's plight very soon infected Rosie, adding to her confusion of mind and deepening her sense of conflict. From the resultant strain she continued to suffer physically as well as spiritually. In 1863 she again fell sick ; and, writing to Norton in the March of that year, Ruskin speaks of 'some over-excitement of the brain' which caused 'occasional loss of consciousness,' so that 'now she often seems only half herself, as if partly dreaming.' Yet, groping through the veils of illusion, Rose still made repeated and pathetic attempts to cure him of his disbelief. 'How could one love you, (she would demand) if you were a Pagan ?'

That he was a pagan he could no longer deny—at least from the point of view of Harristown or Denmark Hill ; but firmly, almost angrily, he rebutted his father's suggestion that, as a result of his loss of faith, his character had suffered. 'My mother and you (he wrote) have such pain at present in thinking my character is deteriorating ? . . . I could easily prove to you, if I chose, but take it on my word, and do not force me to humiliate you by doing so—that I am an incomparably nobler and worthier person, now, when you disapprove of nearly all I say and do, than I was when I was everything you and my mother desired me.' In spite of these strenuous efforts at self-justification, the two old people continued to mourn over their apostate offspring, and the atmosphere of their house, whenever he revisited it, seemed equally oppressive. Desperately he longed for a home of his own. The La Touches had at one moment suggested that he should take a cottage beside the river just beyond their park-wall ; but the plan, in circumstances which remain mysterious, but which Ruskin described to Lady Trevelyan as 'unspeakable' and 'somewhat sorrowful,' eventually miscarried. It also occurred to him that he might rent a room in Rossetti's house in Chelsea—that curious bohemian establishment, peopled by exotic animals, where Meredith once watched the painter, round about noon, devour with ogreish enthusiasm an enormous breakfast of cold poached eggs which appeared to have slowly bled to death on many slices of thick bacon. It was not a lodging that would have suited the fastidious critic. He did not pursue the project, and at last decided that he would give up any thought of living in England and build an Alpine eyrie. It was to be near

Bonneville, a place he especially loved ; and there, in spite of his father's intense disapproval, he wished to purchase an entire mountain-top. Since it was waterless, he intended to construct a dam which would catch the water from the snow-fields : a chalet was to be raised, and Edward Burne-Jones must, of course, consent to decorate it. Only the demands of the grasping peasantry, who were convinced that the mad Englishman, with his geologist's hammer, had discovered a vein of gold or stumbled on a coal-deposit, caused his Alpine plans to go the way of all the projects that had preceded them.

James Ruskin was patient but apprehensive. 'It is the Building Plan near Bonneville (he observed to Mrs. Burne-Jones) that I shall rejoice to see resigned' ; meanwhile he would 'endeavour to hope that John's Engagements abroad may in future be confined to a Tour with a friend, and that Home Influences may in the end prevail. . . .' But they showed no signs of prevailing when John returned to England in November 1863. He was as restless as ever, apparently as unwilling or as unable to settle down beneath his parents' supervision ; and during the December of that year he wrote from the North of England the letter that contained the fullest, most unsparing condemnation of the 'terrific mistakes' which his mother and father had committed in the management of his early life. Spring arrived, and he was again at Denmark Hill. There, late one Saturday night, as he came in from a dinner-party, Ruskin found that the old man had chosen to sit up for him. He was anxious to show John two business letters 'on a difficult subject' which he had just completed. He was very proud of them, his son remarked : 'so he read them both to me (boring me mightily, for I was dog-tired. . . .). I listened to and praised the first : the second . . . I got thinking of something else in the midst of, which he seeing rose and bade me good-night.' The next morning it was clear that he was ill and later that day he experienced a seizure. The following Thursday, March 3rd, 1864, James died, in the arms of the son whom he had loved and helped to mould and (as John assured him) ruined. He was buried in a churchyard near Croydon, under a brief inscription of Ruskin's own composing. 'He was (his son informed posterity) an entirely honest merchant . . .'

* * *

His father's extinction brought Ruskin back to Denmark Hill, to duties and associations that, only a few years earlier, he seemed definitely to be abandoning ; but it did not bring him back in his emotional entirety—as once before he had returned when the

ungracious Effie disappeared. Many experiences had intervened, and today his heart was elsewhere ; for, although Denmark Hill and the obligations it imposed might monopolise him physically, in heart he was always with Rose La Touche, a victim of the persistent waking dream, the rapturous hallucination, that had mastered him since 1858. His activities were not thereby lessened—Ruskin published a number of important and characteristic works between 1864 and 1870, and lectured at the Working Men's College and at Manchester and Cambridge ; but every activity, he afterwards informed a friend, had been coloured by the idea of Rose ; he had had no thought ' but was in some part of it hers ' ; to her he had dedicated every intellectual effort. Thus the history of the next six years is primarily the history of Ruskin's thwarted passion—thwarted by differences of age and outlook, thwarted, too, by something in Ruskin's temperament which caused him to lean always towards the remote and unattainable. Rose's remoteness did not decrease. Her mother spoke of her as still a child, while her devotee was determined to credit his idol with more than adult subtlety ; and Rose herself (he gradually became aware) was apt to take refuge in her youth from the difficulties of a position she could not wholly understand. Across the decades that divided them, an emotionally retarded man made desperate, appealing gestures to a precocious adolescent. But Rose's precocity was relative ; and it has been asserted by one of Ruskin's closest friends that, from the sexual point of view, she never reached maturity, with consequent grave disturbances both on the physical and on the spiritual plane. Nor did her feelings, we may surmise, ever mature beyond a certain stage. They had developed early, and with promising exuberance ; she had revealed an instinctive appreciation of the devotion that she called forth, had humoured and teased and beguiled her admirer, until he assured himself that, notwithstanding all Mrs. La Touche's declarations to the contrary, Rose not only liked and respected, but loved and understood him. A moment arrived when he demanded definite proof, and at that moment the quality he had prized most—Rose's delicate elusiveness—was an enraging, maddening obstacle. She had gone so far ; she would advance no farther. As his signals to her grew more passionate, more despairing, she appeared insensibly to shrink away.

Intellectuals at Wroclaw: A Sketchbook

BY FELIKS TOPOLSKI



PUDOVKIN

THE International Congress of Intellectuals for Peace, held in Wroclaw, Poland, during August 1948, was attended by Feliks Topolski, an artist of British nationality but of Polish origin, who was revisiting his native country after an absence of many years.

Of the Congress itself he writes: 'However ambiguous were the results of the Congress, however abortive may prove our

hopes that the prestige of assembled writers and scientists will have some genuine effect upon the international situation, nevertheless the apparently impossible did, in fact, occur. Russian intellectuals—Ehrenburg, Pudovkin, Solokhov—sat alongside such representatives of Western Europe as Huxley, Boyd Orr, Picasso, Vercors, Bedel, Hughes, and, although they may have quarrelled in public, in private dined and argued with them. To-day the growing political estrangement between West and East is apt to produce a sense of fearful vacuum, and writers and artists in one half of the world are inclined to cut themselves off from much precious raw material offered by the other. The Wroclaw Conference gave those who attended it a chance of making up for lost time.'

Illustrations

1. THE DEAN OF CANTERBURY. *Behind*: DR. MULK RAJ ANAND (INDIA), ZASLAWSKI (U.S.S.R.) AND OTHERS.
2. THE DEAN OF CANTERBURY, AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE PRESIDENTIAL DAIS. *On the right*: A DISTINGUISHED POLISH SINGER.
3. SIR JOHN BOYD ORR, DONALD OGDEN STUART (U.S.A.), A BULGARIAN ARTIST, ANNA SEGHERS, LEOPOLDO MENDEZ (MEXICO), ELUARD, JULIAN TUWIM (POLAND).
4. RUSSIAN DELEGATION. *Left to right*: PROFESSOR IVAN BARDIN (PLANNER), ZASLAWSKI (COLUMNIST), EHRENBURG (WRITER), PALLADIN (PRESIDENT UKRAINIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE), PROFESSOR E. TARLÉ (HISTORIAN), AND OTHERS.
5. BRITISH DELEGATES. *Left to right*: PROFESSOR BERNAL, PROFESSOR H. LEVY, RICHARD HUGHES.
6. PICASSO.

[The full collection of Feliks Topolski's Wroclaw drawings will be on exhibition early in 1949 at the London Gallery, who are also publishing a descriptive pamphlet.]

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Anna Seghers

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ФИНАНСОВЕ ХОЗЯЙСТВО ПОЛЬШИ
POLISH PLANNED ECONOMY



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